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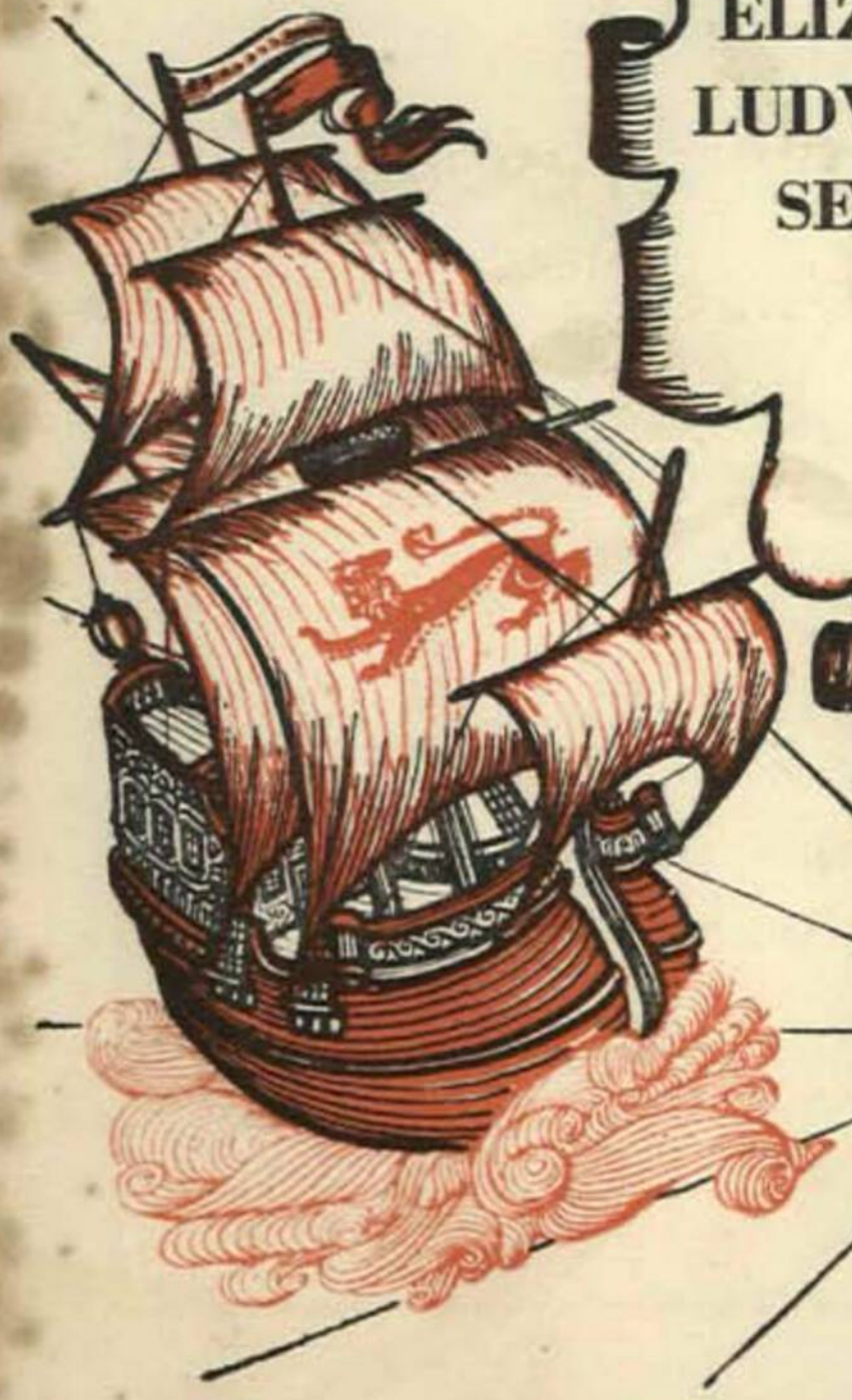

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I LITTLE thought when I arrived at my friend Borg's house that I was about to see something truly extraordinary, and to increase my mental powers tenfold.

He had asked me to come to Stockholm to lecture to the Swedes about Lister and other British scientists. On the evening of my arrival, after the champagne, our conversation turned naturally to the problems of public speaking and to the great labour imposed on us lecturers by the need to be word perfect in our lectures.

Borg then told me that his power of memory would probably amaze me—and I had known him, while we were studying law together in Paris, to have the most deplorable memory!

So he went to the end of the dining room and asked me to write down a hundred three-figure numbers, calling each one out in a clear voice. When I had filled the edge of an old newspaper with figures, *Borg repeated them to me in the order in which I had written them down and then in reverse order, that is beginning with the last number. He also allowed me to ask him the relative position of different numbers: for example, which was the 24th, the 72nd, and the 38th, and I noticed that he replied to all my questions at once and without effort, as if the figures which I had written on the paper had been also written in his brain.*

I was dumbfounded by such a feat and sought in vain for the trick which enabled him to achieve it. My friend then said: "The thing you have just seen and which seems so remarkable is, in fact, quite simple; everybody has a memory good enough to do the same, but few indeed can use this wonderful faculty."

He then revealed to me how I could achieve a similar feat of memory, and I at once mastered the secret—without mistakes and without effort—as you too will master it tomorrow.

But I did not stop at these amusing experiments. I applied the principles I had learned in my daily work. I could now remember, with unbelievable facility, the lectures I heard and those which I gave myself, the names of people I met—even if it was only once—as well as their addresses, and a thousand other details which were most useful to me. *Finally, I discovered after a while that not only had my memory improved, but that I had also acquired greater powers of concentration; a surer judgment—which is by no means surprising since the keenness of our intellect is primarily dependent on the number and variety of the things we remember.*

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Write now—while copies of this booklet are still available. L. CONWAY.

ARGOSY

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Shining Star

OUT of the orient crystal skies
A blazing star did shine,
Showing the place where poorly lies
A blessed babe divine.

This shining star three kings did guide
Even from the furthest East,
To Bethlehem where it betide
This blessed babe did rest.

Laid in a silly manger poor,
Betwixt an ox and ass,
Whom these three kings did all adore
As God's high pleasure was.

And for the joy of his great birth
A thousand angels sing
'Glory and peace unto the earth
Where born is this new King!"

Christmas Eve in Brooklyn

The liquid blue of her Irish eyes stopped him dead on the stairs

by SEAN O'FAOLAIN

MAXER CREEDON was comforting himself as only one drunk can comfort another, softly, tenderly, understandingly. "Poor Creedon!" he was whispering, letting the crowds bumping past him rock him like a ninepin. "You're all alone. You've no one to talk to. You've nowhere to go except back to the bloody ould ship. New York all lit up! Everybody all lit up! Except poor Creedon!"

At first he had loved it all. Crowds everywhere. Everybody carrying piles of parcels in green and gold, tied up with red ribbon, fixed with holly sprigs. Whenever he bumped them and dislodged a parcel they said Ooops, or Sorry, and laughed or smiled at him and he had laughed back.

He had given his total, complete, and unqualified approval to the twelve giant angels made of gold wire blowing their twelve golden trumpets in Rockefeller Plaza. In fact he had personally pointed them out to several passers-by for fear they might not notice them. On Park Avenue he had asked a cop if he observed how lovely it was the way when all the traffic lights changed from red to green all the Christmas trees at once changed colour by reflection.

A star of snow settled lazily into a woman's hair. It was as nice as a bird coming down on a branch. The clouds of light smoking down from the tops of the lighted buildings, and the sky dark over them. Bells in the dark sky. Smells of pine and balsam. Only around the lights could you see the lazy, wavering snow.

It was all heavenly. It had all been just the way he used to be thinking about it, slopping across the Atlantic through the sleet and the snow. But no longer . . .

"To hell with 'em! To hell with everybody!"

"Ooops! Sorree!"

He did not laugh back any more. He felt out of it all.

It was then that it happened. And afterwards if anybody ever mentioned New York to him he would say, "Do you know Altman's store on Fifth Avenue? That place saved my life!" And he would tell them all about Poor Lily.

In Altman's window he saw a village. There was a tiny river of real water, and a harbour with real water that blew into waves, and in the harbour a full-rigged schooner, and at the back there were farms and wooded hills. The trees stirred. The ship's flag floated in the wind. Clouds floated softly across the blue sky behind it all. In the distance a train went by. In one big field he counted twenty-one cows, all black-and-white. Holsteins. A red barn, an orchard, a shelter-belt of pines. Cars moved slowly along the roads.

Daylight thickened into dusk. Dots of snow began to sink endlessly down the sky, and then stars began to wink, and the windows of the village began to light up one after another. A lighthouse beam revolved. When the train came again it was lighted. Suddenly the whole village went black; there was nothing but the moon, and the eyes of the cars on the roads, and the lighthouse gleaming across the water.

It could have been anywhere, in America, in Switzerland, in Germany. Maxer knew it was an Irish village. He could walk into that village any minute—if he could only remember its name.

At Forty-Second Street he turned blindly away from Fifth Avenue. He must have crossed Broadway, and not even seen it, because the next thing he noticed was the Eighth Avenue sign. He was sitting up at the counter of a drugstore ordering black coffee. With one eye screwed up he was looking out at the green traffic light.

Ballyroche! The traffic light winked to red. Nine years ago! For her funeral. As he began to suck the coffee he was smiling over her old yarns.

"And, Mother, what about the day you and Lily were chased by Bergin's bull . . . And, Mother, what about the day Lily went to . . . Ah wisha, Mother, I wonder where's poor Lily now, at all at all, or is she dead or alive?"

Always the same words for every yarn. Before the light winked green again he was through that one.

"Ah wisha, then, I wonder where's poor Lily now, at all at all, or is she dead or alive? It was all through an Italian. Going from one farm to another he used to be, selling holy statues. Bandello his name was. Oh, a black, handsome divil o' hell. I never saw a more handsome man in all my life. One wet, wild,

windy October morning didn't she creep out of bed and we all sound asleep, and go off with him?

" I often and often heard my father saying that the last seen of her was standing in from the rain under the big tree by Ballyroche Cross. It was Mikey Clancy the postman saw her. ' Yerrah, Lily girl,' says he, ' and what are you doing here at this hour of the morning? ' ' I'm waiting,' says she, ' for to go on the milk-cart into Fareens.'

" And from that day to this not a sight nor a sound of her no more than if the earth swallowed her, only for the one letter from a priest in America saying she was happily married in Brooklyn."

As always, the story used to end with the count of the years. The last time Maxer heard it the count had reached " forty-one years ago come next October." The traffic light winked to green. Fifty-odd years ago. And more.

It suddenly came to Maxer that Poor Lily was a real woman. He fumbled for a long time with the picture of her living in this city, married, with a family. Then he lumbered down from his stool and went to the end of the store to the telephone. His fat finger was slowly tracing its way down the grey page among the Brooklyn BAN's. *Bandello, Mrs. Lily.* He found a coin, shoved it in heavily, dialled the number with deliberation.

He heard an old woman's voice. He said slowly and carefully, " My name is Matty Creedon. Only they all call me Maxer. I come from Limerick, Ireland. My mother was your sister. She came from behind Ballyroche. Are you by any chance my Auntie Lily? "

There was a pause. The old woman's voice said harshly, " What do you want? "

" Nothing at all! Only I thought we might have a bit of an ould gosther. I'm a sailor. Docked this morning in the Hudson."

The voice was still cold. " Did somebody tell you to call me? "

" Naw! Just a pure fluke. I looked your name up in the directory. I often heard my mother talking about you. I just wanted to have a chat with someone. Being Christmas time and all that. And knowing nobody in New York. But I don't want to butt in if you wouldn't like it." He was getting cross with her.

She was a bit less cold when she said, " And nobody sent you? "

" Inspiration sent me! " She could take that any bloody way she liked. " Look, let's skip it! O.K.? "

" Why don't you come over and see me? "—Friendly now.

" Now? This minute? "

" Right away."

" Sure, Auntie Lily. I'll be right over. But I sincerely hope you're not thinking that I'm trying to butt in? "

" It was very nice of you to call me, Matty. Very nice indeed. I'll be glad to see you."

She hung up. He was grinning when he hung up. She still had the Limerick accent, and she talked just like his mother. A proper ould boss. If she was a day she'd be seventy. Tall, thin, handsome. And a bit of a boaster. The real lawdy-daw, doing the grand lady, and under it all, as soft as moss. She'd be cleaning the house now like a divil. And giving jaw to ould Bandello. If he was alive?

He took the wrong subway and had to change twice. After that he paused to have another black coffee to sober up, and he bought a bottle of Jamaica rum for a present. He walked five blocks before he found where she lived. The snow was thickening. A parked automobile was coated white. It was a dim street. An old brownstone house with steps. Five families lived in it.

The minute he saw her on top of the dim-lit landing waiting, looking down at him, he knew her. She had his mother's wide mouth. She was tall, thin, handsome, white-haired, stooped. But he had forgotten the liquid blue of her eyes and they stopped him dead on the stairs, his hand tight on the banister.

He was hearing the soft wind sighing over the level Limerick plain. For miles and miles not a sound but that sighing wind. The meadows flowed like water under it. All over that great Shannon plain it was the only lively thing—a plain where a cross-roads is an event; where from a low hillock you see miles and miles of small fields divided by stone walls; at most a little sleepy lake. A stream there is a river; a village is a town. The meadows are as high as your hips; in the pastures the cows barely able to lift their eyelids—like owls—to look over the greasy tips of the buttercups.

The two eyes looking down at him were bits of the pale blue of that albino sky, almost bleached of colour, stretched tight over it all.

He advanced slowly to meet her. Even side by side she could still look down at him. When she started to search his face with her pale eyes he knew what she was looking for. When she threw her arms around his neck and broke into a low, soft wailing, he knew she had found it. He said, gently, " Auntie! You're the dead image of her! "

She hauled him into her room by her two bony hands, and became bossy and cross with him. " What kept you? You

bold boy! You've been drinking. And I suppose not a bit of solid food in your stomach since morning?"

He smiled humbly.

"I'm sorry, Auntie. As a matter of fact I didn't eat anything since I had a cup of coffee this morning. If you had a bite now I'd eat it for you."

"Of course you got to eat something, lovie. Drinking like that all day, I'm ashamed of you. Sit down. Take off your jacket. I've got coffee, and hamburgers, and cakes, and pie, and—I always lay in a stock for Christmas. Lily Bandello keeps an open house for all her friends at Christmas. Nobody ever said Lily Bandello didn't have a warm welcome for all her friends and relations at Christmas time and every other time . . ."

She was bustling in and out of the kitchenette, talking back to him. It was an old, dusty, dusky, cluttered-up room, with a big mirrored wardrobe bearing piles of cardboard boxes, and a divan in one corner as high as a bed, and he guessed that there was a wash-basin behind the peacock-screen. There was a fluted glass bell around the single electric bulb in the ceiling. He saw photographs in green velvet frames. The pope over the bed was Leo XIII. The snowflakes endlessly touched the bare window-panes, like paws trying to get in. They melted, and came again, and melted, and came again.

From the kitchenette she had begun the questions. "How's Bid?"

"Bid? Oh, my mother? Well, of course, I mean to say, that is. My mother? Oh, you mean my mother? My mother is grand, Auntie. Never better. For her age, of course. Fine! Fine out! Just like yourself. I got a letter from her only two weeks ago. Only for a touch of rheumatism now and again."

"And your pop?"

"My pop? My father? Oh, he, well now, he. Oh, you mean my father? Sure, he's in the pink. Grand out! Blooming! Never better!"

"Go on then, tell me about them all. When did you see your Uncle Matty? Where is he at all now or is he dead or alive? And what about Janey? And Cis? When were you down in Ballyroche last? Is it all changed now? Everything modern I suppose, up to date, electric light, and I suppose the ould pony and trap is gone years ago. Have they an automobile? It's only last night I was thinking of Mikey Clancy the postman. Of course John has the farm now. Go on, you're telling me nothing."

She was planking down the hamburgers, the iced Christmas cake, the coffee.

"Well, about Uncle Matty now. That's your brother Matty.

Well, of course, you can't say he's as young as he was. That's only natural. I saw him there only last year and he was looking fine. Grand out! A bit stooped, you know. Yes, I'd be inclined to say he was a bit stooped. But in great form. For his age, of course."

"Eat up, eat up. Don't mind me. He has a big line, I suppose, how many in family has he at all?"

"His family? Let me see now. His family. Oh well, of course, they're doing marvellous. Let me see now, there's Tom. And there's Kitty. Is it Kitty? Yes, that's right, Kitty. And, eh, there's, eh, there's Stephen. And Maureen! God, I can't remember the half of 'em."

"Wisha, you're a bad reporter. What about the place? All sorts of improvements?"

"Yes and no. They have twenty-one cows. Holsteins. The black-and-white fellows. And a red barn. And a shelter-belt of pines. And an orchard. Oh, 'tis grand there now to see the wind in the trees, and when the lights in the windows go out the way the lighthouse starts winking at you, and—"

"What lighthouse? What are you dreaming about? There's no lighthouse. Is it a lighthouse in the middle of the country?"

"There is a lighthouse. I saw it. In the harbour."

"What harbour? Are you daft?"

"I'm not daft, didn't I see it with my own two eyes! And at night there now 'tis lovely to see the train coming along with all its windows lighting."

"A train? A lighthouse? I know what you're talking about now. You're talking about the lighthouse on the Shannon. God bless us and save us, how many times did I see it from the hill of Knockaderry! But there's no harbour, Matty."

"Of course I meant the Shannon lighthouse. And there *is* a harbour. There's a harbour at Foynes."

"Oh, for God's sake, sure that's miles and miles and miles away. And I'm certain you can see no train from anywhere near Ballyroche."

They argued it hither and over, until she suddenly found the coffee was gone cold. Angrily she bustled out again to the kitchenette, talking back to him to keep the argument up.

"You can see Moneygray Castle. And the turn of the Deel. In my time there were stepping-stones across the Deel if you crossed over behind Normoyle's short cut. And the pike road behind that into Fareens . . ."

The snowflakes endlessly touching the pane melted like memories.

"Tell me, Auntie," he called in to her, "why the hell did you never write home? Never once in fifty years?"

"Didn't I?" she said, planking down the coffee, and looking at him with a crooked smile like a bold child. "Not even once?"

"As my mother used to say, not a sight nor a sound of you from that day to this no more than if the earth swallowed her. Oh, you're a nice one!"

She only gave a little laugh and tapped his wrist and said, "Eat up."

"Did you always live here, Auntie Lily?"

She sat down and put her face between her palms, with her elbows on the table, and looked at him.

"Here? Well, that is to say, no. No, not here! My husband and I had a house of our very own. He was very well off, you know. He was a jeweller. While he was alive we got on grand. He loved me. And I loved him. That is only natural, of course. Then he died. He was killed. In a railroad accident. Five years ago. Of course, I need hardly say he left me very well off. But I didn't need a whole house any longer. So I came here."

"Oh, sure, 'tis fine. 'Tis all you want. I mean to say, for a lone woman."

"Yes, as you say, for a lone woman. Of course I have my boy. But he married. He married a Pole. She is a very beautiful girl. He's doing grand. They'll be coming over for me tomorrow morning to spend Christmas Day with them. They have an apartment on Riverside Drive. And a Cadillac. He's manager of a big department store. Macy's on Flatbush Avenue."

"Oh, that's grand out. And tell me, has he a family now?"

"No, you tell me about yourself."

"Me? I have nothing to tell. The last trip I had was down to Galveston. This next trip we'll hit the Port of London. If I have a few days off I might even go over to Ireland."

"You mean—Limerick? Back to Ballyroche?"

"Where the hell else would I go? They'll all be delighted to know I met you. They'll be asking me all sorts of questions about you. Tell me more about your son. Has he children?"

"Well, my son's name is Thomas. His wife's name is Catherine. She is very beautiful and they are very well off and very happy. He's earning big money. He's working now in charge of the men's department in Sears Roebuck on Bedford Avenue. Oh, he's fine. He's grand out! As you say yourself. He has three children. There's Janey. And then there is Cissy. And then there is Stephen."

Her voice faltered and she closed her eyes and he suddenly saw how much, much older she was than his mother had been when he saw her last nine years ago. She had risen and gone

over to a chest of drawers, and from the bottom drawer she was lifting out a heavy album, leather-bound, brass-clasped. She laid it on the table. The pages were thick, grey, and ribbed like grosgrain. They sank open in deep arched cut-outs with sprays of flowers about them like immortelles.

She pointed to three photographs. "My son. My grandchildren."

"Aren't they very like you!".

She said, so low he barely heard her, that they were very like their grandfather. Maxer said that his mother had often told him that he was the most handsome man she ever saw.

"He was," she said quietly, looking long at Maxer out of her pale blue eyes. "He was very handsome."

And with a withered finger she extracted from a loose bundle of photographs a handsome, smiling face, dark-moustachioed. Maxer bent eagerly over it. He said that that was a very fine-looking young man. He said he was certainly a very fine-looking young man indeed.

"Have you any of yourself when you were young?"

She turned a board to show herself, in a long buttoned-bodice dress, wasp-waisted, the breasts taut, the collar in a frill, a bustle. The face was pale and slim and soft. The liquid Limerick eyes were gentle as any sleeping little Limerick lake under that albino sky. The soft lips barely met.

She suddenly placed her palm over the photograph. "Tell me some more about Ballyroche."

He started off on a description of a harvest-home. Her eyes closed. Her breath was coming and going heavily. He felt she was not hearing a word he said. As he wandered on she wiped her eyes with her clenched fist and then her fist fell heavily away. It fell on the handsome, smiling, dark-moustachioed face.

Maxer stopped. She was not heeding him. She was looking down at the face. Then she gripped it and shied it wildly across the room. Maxer saw it curve in its flight and strike the glass of the window full on, hesitate against the melting snowflakes, slide to the ground.

When he looked at her, one white lock was down over one eye. She was leaning forward at him. Her yellow teeth were bared.

"You spy!" she spat at him. "You never came here on your own. You came from *them*. For forty years I never even as much as thought of any wan of ye until you came creeping in on top of me. Did I ask you to come? Did I? Did I?"

Maxer wiped away a drop of her spittle. "I came out of friendliness. That's all."

"Or did you come for a ha'porth of look-about? Well, you

can go back to Ballyroche and tell 'em I'm starving if that's what they'd like to hear. Tell them the truth, the lousy, miserable set of bastards that never gave a thraneen about me from the day I left them. For forty—ay, fifty years your mother, my own sister, never . . ."

" You never wrote to her! You know damn well she'd have done anything for you if she only knew where you were, her heart was stuck in you, the two of ye were inside one another's pockets, my God, she was for ever talking and talking about you, morning noon and night 'twas nothing but Lily here and Lily there until we were sick o' the sound of your name."

" I wrote her six letters, she never replied to one of them."

" She never got them, nobody ever got any letter from you only for the one letter from the priest that married you to say you were well and happy."

" What he wrote was that I was never married. He showed the letter to me. I let him send it. It was my last chance. That wop left me flat here in Brooklyn with my baby. I wrote for help. I wrote to my father. I wrote to my mother. I wrote to the priest in Ballyroche. I wrote to your mother after she was your mother when she had a home of her own. Not one of them ever so much as put pen to paper.

" I had to work every day of my life. I worked today. I'll work the day after tomorrow. I scrub floors if you want to know what I do. And thank God I'm able to do it. I worked to bring up my son. And what did he do? Walked out of this room with his dirty Polack and that was the last I saw of him or her or anybody on this earth belonging to me until I saw you. Go on! Tell them everything! They'll love every word of it! "

Maxer got up and went over to the bed for his jacket. He put it on slowly. As he buttoned up he kept looking at her sprawled across the table, staring up at him. He said, at last, quietly, " There's no one to tell. They're all dead."

At that he looked away at the paws of the snow touching the pane. They died, and vanished, and came again. He heard her say, in a low voice, " Who is dead? "

" All of them. And you needn't worry. Limerick will never see the shine of my face again. When my mother died my father remarried. I hated his guts. I ran away to sea when I was sixteen."

He was at the door when she called him by his name. He halted. He did not turn round. He felt her hand on his arm. Then he heard her whispering to him in a voice as soft as moss, timidly, " Don't go away, Matty. Don't go away, lovie. Have a little drink with me. I'll make you a rum punch. For Christ's

sake, Matty, don't leave me alone on Christmas Eve with *them*!"

Maxer looked round at her. She was as old as ninety, and she was small, and she had the face of a girl that is in love with a fellow she isn't sure of yet. The wind was blowing across her like death, wrinkling her lips, overflowing her pallid eyes.

Maxer drew in and let out the slowest and longest breath of his life. Then he threw his cap on the bed and sat down. She raced into the kitchen to put on the kettle while he sat there like a big baboon with his hands between his knees, watching the snow kissing the warm pane.

Presently she brought in two big glasses of punch, with lemon, and cinnamon-stick and sugar, and she held out one to him, pleading. Maxer looked at it and looked at her, so timid, so pleading, and he began to laugh, and then he choked the laugh by putting his face into his hands to hide his eyes, and, "Christ!" he groaned into his hands, "you might as well be married to me."

He took the glass she still held out to him, and he clicked her glass. "Well, Auntie! Here's to Poor Lily!"

"Poor Lily," she smiled back.

"Poor Creedon," he said and began to laugh sadly again.

When they had drunk a few sups she took his free hand and rubbed it, and her mouth was wavering like water under wind as she asked, "Did she really and truly talk about me, lovie? Or is that lies too?"

"That's what I can't understand, Auntie. She was always going on about you. She'd be crying rain down and she talking about you. Are you sure she knew you were on the rocks?"

The rheumy eyelids lidded sadly.

"She knew. They all knew. It doesn't matter now. I didn't understand for a long time. I understood when my boy left me. I'd put him before everything else in the whole world. And I guess she was having a hard time bringing ye all up. It's a hard world, lovie, and there's no one in it more hard and cruel than a mother. I'm glad she talked about me. It's better than nothing."

She made more punch, and she made more after that, and they drained the bottle between them, talking about everybody either of them had ever known along the Shannon shore. Then he was kissing her good-bye, again and again, promising her over and over to come back the next time he was in New York, laughing back at her as he stumbled down the stairs, waving to her, as tight as a drum.

The snow sank heavy and grey and wet into the Hudson. The long riverside was empty. Then Maxer appeared, making his

way to his ship. He came kicking the snow and slush in furious fountains before him, so roaring mad with rage, and love, and pity, and hate, and a tremendous sense of joy and triumph that the dockside cop who saw him coming walked the other way, shaking his head like any man who has seen something that he envies from the bottom of his heart.

A few minutes later the riverside was deserted again.

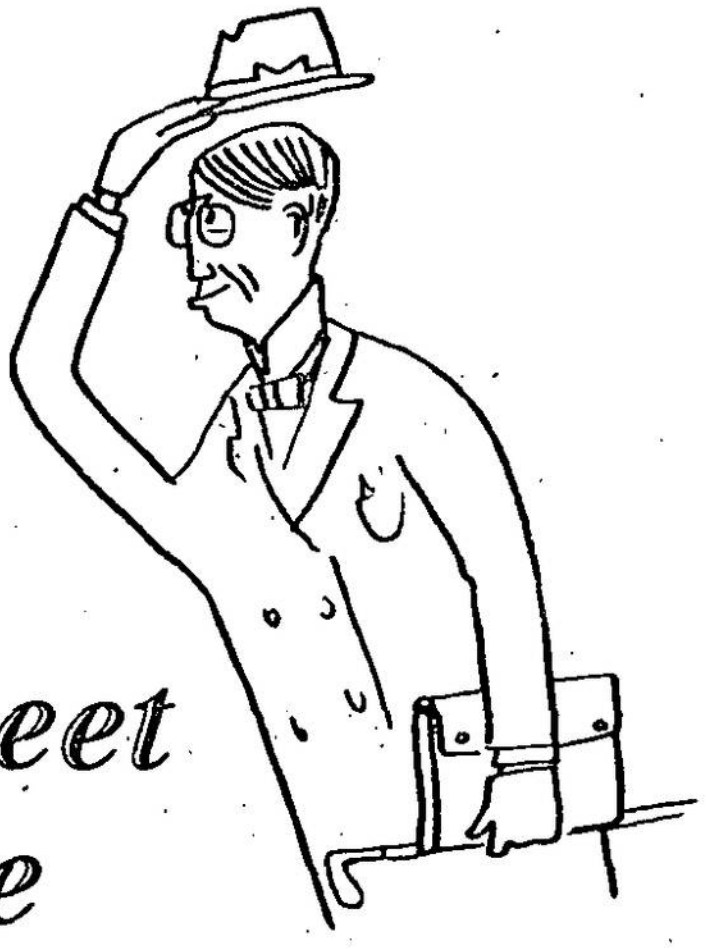
★ ***There's a true touch of Irish in Sean O'Faolain's dramatic story of Brooklyn. Himself born in Ireland in 1900, he married in America in 1928, where he motor-camped about 3,000 miles all over the States. Biographies—one of De Valera—travel books, stories, translations, criticism come from his versatile pen. He now lives outside Dublin and devotes all his time to writing. Attended university in Ireland and at Harvard, but says his education was "mainly by good conversation," and that his chief recreation is day-dreaming.***

★ ★ ★

BOX OF CRACKERS

Whether you find them easy to pull or hard to crack, the assorted contents of our seasonable teasers should amount to 41 points. Solution on page 71.

1. *You are stocking up on Christmas poultry of an exotic kind for a large number of guests! What are the proper collective nouns for these birds: quail, grouse, partridges, peacocks, pheasants, swans, ducks, geese, turkeys*
2. *What were the first three Christmas presents and who gave them?*
3. *There are two Christmas Islands. Where are they?*
4. *What king stole three pecks of barley meal to make a bag pudding and stuffed it well with plums?*
5. *Who said: "I have often thought it happens very well that Christmas should fall out in the middle of winter."*
6. *On the first day of Christmas my true love sent to me a partridge in a pear tree. What did he send on the tenth day?*
7. *We all know who wrote A Christmas Carol—no marks given! But can you name the authors of the following: Christmas Pudding; A Christmas Garland; Christmas Holiday*
8. *Can you spell the word MISTLETOE in the Crazy Telephone Alphabet (i.e., A for 'Orses, B for Mutton)*



The Street Where The Heart Lies

by LUDWIG BEMELMANS

THE most self-effacing and kindly gentleman of the neighbourhood was Monsieur Camille Saint Juste. He lived a steady and blameless life on the third floor of a six-storey building in the rue Gît-le-Cœur, which, when translated, means the Street where the Heart Lies.

He was the recipient, day in and out, of the concierge's smile, the only smile she had ever bestowed on a lodger. She said of him, "*C'est un monsieur tout à fait comme il faut*," and if a Parisian janitress says of a man that he is altogether faultless, that is the highest possible character endorsement.

Even the fox-terrier of the concierge, who raised his right front leg as a preliminary to a furious fit of snapping at the approach of anybody, relaxed when he saw Monsieur Saint Juste.

The children called him affectionately "Monsieur la Tortue," not only because he resembled one, but mostly on account of his being as mute and self-contained as a turtle.

He was that anonymous type of neat and energetic French citizen that stalks along stiffly as a sandpiper, who may be any-

where between fifty and a hundred years old and be either an Academician, a duke, or the last violinist of the Concert Pas de Loup.

The appearance of this type in the street is uniform—always in black, never without dark gloves and a dark cane, a dark hat, a collar that is called " false," for it is not attached to the shirt, and a tie, dark and carefully knotted. The ensemble is completed with small marks of distinction, such as the rosette of the Legion of Honour or the Knights of Lorraine, or with a ring of special significance.

Monsieur Saint Juste was further distinguished by a pair of golden pince-nez and a carefully adjusted and always combed toupee, which he wore not so much out of vanity as for protection against the cold draughts of indoor and outdoor Paris.

He was extremely shy; he could not talk; he could not sing. But he could write, and for years he had supported himself by translations of French texts into English, and vice versa.

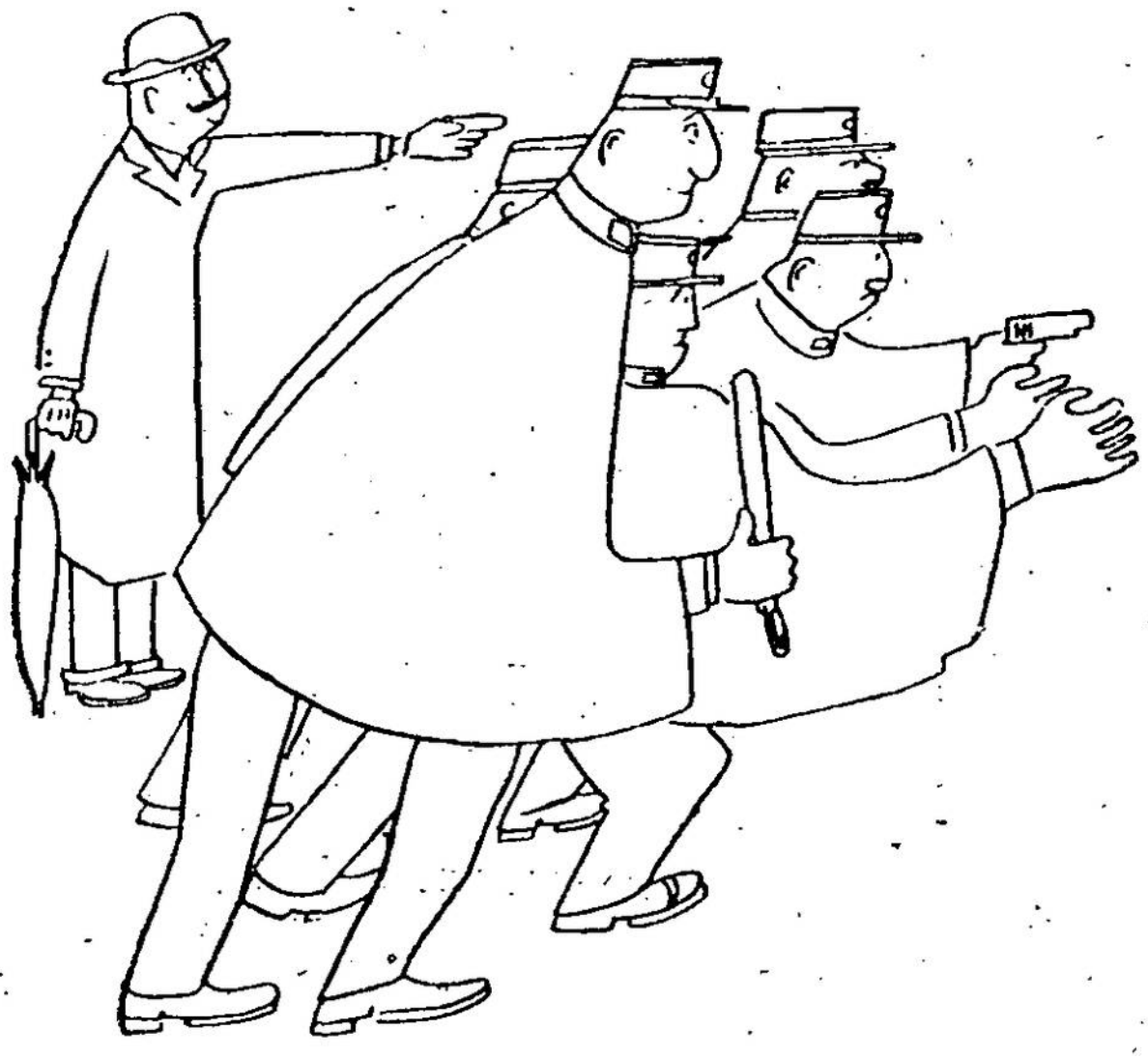
During these labours he had often mildly wondered at the courage of authors. To the right and left of him lay volumes in which machine-guns and revolvers spattered, in which women

rose from the gutter to become atom spies and in which the guillotine chopped for ever through newly discovered characters in the French Revolution.

Eventually these tales had their effect on Monsieur Saint Juste, and he developed a shaky trust, a wobbly hope, that perhaps, one day, he himself might walk out on the tightrope of authorship and write. "Write what?" he said to himself often, as he carefully knotted his tie. And he answered himself, "Nothing ever happens."

The urge of creation finally gripped him so strongly that he put on paper his own observations of the familiar things, the happenings in his neighbourhood. He found a publisher, and the book, which was entitled, *The Street where the Heart Lies*, appeared and was a mild success. The publisher said it was remarkable that it sold as well as it did for after all nothing happened in the book that was very extraordinary. The royalties from this first effort were, however, sufficient for Monsieur Saint Juste to buy something he had always wanted—a bath, complete with tub and a machine called Vulcan, which by means of a pipe coiled round a blue gas flame gave forth instant hot water.

On the morning of that long-awaited day when the installation was finished and the Vulcan worked, Monsieur Saint Juste reflected again upon the business of writing and he determined that in his next novel something tremendous and surprising



would take place. He relaxed in his bath and was about to turn off the hot water when the concierge of his house announced outside the door that there was a telegram for him. She pushed the telegram under the door, and a small corner of the envelope became visible.

Monsieur Saint Juste stepped out of his bath and tried to get the envelope, which he regarded with misgivings, for he belonged to that group of the population who receive telegrams only on the death of close relatives. He opened the door slightly and, seeing no one on the stairs, opened it wider to reach for the telegram. When the draught caused by the open door blew the paper out of his reach, Monsieur Saint Juste took a step outside his premises to get hold of the wire. Just then he heard a sudden bang and found himself, without any clothes, on the landing.

The poor man was in panic, for he heard the clatter of a woman's heels coming down the stairs. He ran below and into the lady who lived on the second floor. Not recognizing Monsieur Saint Juste without his clothes, toupee, and eyeglasses, she ran back into her apartment, slammed the door, and opened the window, screaming for the police.

The nude man, descending the stairs with the uncertainty of the myopic, felt his way along the entrance hall and, mostly by memory, gained the security of a curtain that hid the entrance to the bedroom of the concierge, who occupied two rooms on the ground floor—one of which faced the street, and the second, mostly windowless, served as a bedroom.

There was shouting outside, and the tension grew with the crowd that assembled. The lady of the second floor had become the most important personage in the street. She explained, between the waves of tumult, that a maniac was loose in the house. The windows of every apartment in the street were filled with people, all except those of the apartment of Monsieur Saint Juste.

Hard words had given way to ugly ones; the mood of the crowd was getting dangerous, and the police decided to ask for additional reinforcements before they would attempt to take the criminal. Soon the Paris police sirens, which go, "*Hoopaw, Hoopaw*," sounded. An inspector of the Brigade Mondaine arrived and took over.

He detailed men to go up to the roofs of the adjoining buildings, commanded others to keep order in the street and to keep moving the traffic which had come to a standstill, and he himself with five men entered the house, ready to pounce upon the criminal.

When they found him, he behaved typically. He cowered, wrapped in half of the ancient brown velvet curtain which was

attached with heavy wooden rings to a pole overhead. A scream came from the concierge's bedroom when she saw where the fiend had hidden. She clutched her two children and ran out of the front door to inform the waiting mob that he had been caught.

Unable to remove the culprit as he was or wrapped in the drapery, a policeman put his cape as protection around Monsieur Saint Juste. It was fortunate that the police were there in large numbers and that Monsieur Saint Juste was camouflaged with a blue cape and not instantly recognizable, for as he was brought out, the fury of the mob was almost whipped into action.

The prisoner was quickly packed off into the dark blue van; two motor-cycle police made way for it. The second van with police followed; and, after this, the car of the inspector of the Brigade Mondaine. "*Hoopaw, Hoopaw,*" howled the cars, and the mob followed them across the bridge.

It was evident that this was a case for the criminal courts rather than for a magistrate and, therefore, Camille Saint Juste found himself facing the examining judge of the Parquet of the Seine. As he was seated there, shackled, he was offered a cigarette, which he declined, for he neither drank nor smoked; he merely shook with an inner excitement. At last something had happened to him, and he had, he knew, a plot—the kind that fitted into the Rue Morgue rather than into the Street where the Heart Lies. He wondered whether he should let life go on spinning the yarn for him, or whether it was better to explain.

The Judge of Instruction, as the examining judge is called in France, disappointed Monsieur Saint Juste, for he was a kind soul, who seemed to be concerned about him. "*Voyons,*" he said, with reproach, to the inspector of the Brigade Mondaine. He said it so that it meant, "But you've made a mistake. This is evidently not a criminal." The inspector read off his notes. The judge became more sympathetic to the accused, and ordered the handcuffs removed. "Tell me what happened."

Monsieur Saint Juste made the gesture all Frenchmen use to denote that something fantastic has happened. He threw both arms into the air, thereby disrobing himself again. He quickly folded the cloak about his thin shoulders and, clutching it, retired into his shyness.

The thorough, patient judge finally drew out of him that it all had started with a bath. "You stated that you were about to take a bath, monsieur." He looked at the deposition. "You stated that you had turned on the hot water——"

"Mon dieu!" cried the accused, "it is still running—the hot water!"

"Well, then, monsieur," said the judge, "the matter is very

simple. You will be taken back to your house. If it is flooded, your story holds water, and you are restored to liberty and honour."

The judge stood up and shook his hand. Again the "*Hoopaw, Hoopaw*" was heard and the police, in the same numbers as before, arrived in the quiet Street where the Heart Lies.

The lady of the second floor was crying to the people, who reappeared at their windows, the water was coming through the ceiling. It was suspected that the criminal had killed Monsieur Saint Juste. The children were running around the neighbourhood, importantly whispering the dreadful news—that "Someone has drowned the turtle in his new bathtub."

The police were relieved to see hot water dripping down the stairs. The apartment was opened; the state of things written down in a full police report; Monsieur Saint Juste, in his bathrobe, with his toupee and the golden pince-nez, was identified and restored to his blameless status. All was respectable again, and the police left, laughing. Monsieur Saint Juste waited until his apartment was in order and the floor dried—he smiled out of the window at the disappointed children who stood waiting for his corpse to be removed—and then he decided that at last he would have his well-earned bath.

He let the water run and was about to step into the tub when he heard the voice of his concierge announcing the telegram which everyone had forgotten about. This time Monsieur Saint Juste was extremely careful. He dressed in his bathrobe, put on his toupee and his glasses, and furthermore when he opened the door he braced it with a chair before reaching for the telegram.

Most things official in France are blue, like the telegrams. Also, it is true that when one opens a French telegram it is usually torn, for it is merely a sealed envelope on the inside of which the message is written. This telegram, having been thoroughly soaked, opened easily. Monsieur Saint Juste read it carefully, once, twice. Then he prepared himself for his bath again. He added some warm water. As he stepped into the tub, he was filled with mixed emotions, all of them those of success, of happiness, of hope—all of them so exciting that he could not lean back and relax.

The frugal man had calculated that with the cost of gas and water, he would be able to afford a bath a week. Now suddenly he was able to bath every day, twice if he wanted. He could afford several toupees and, by rotating them, give the illusion that he had had his hair cut, and that it was slowly growing back again. All this on account of the telegram.

He picked it up and read it again. Yes, it was all true. It was

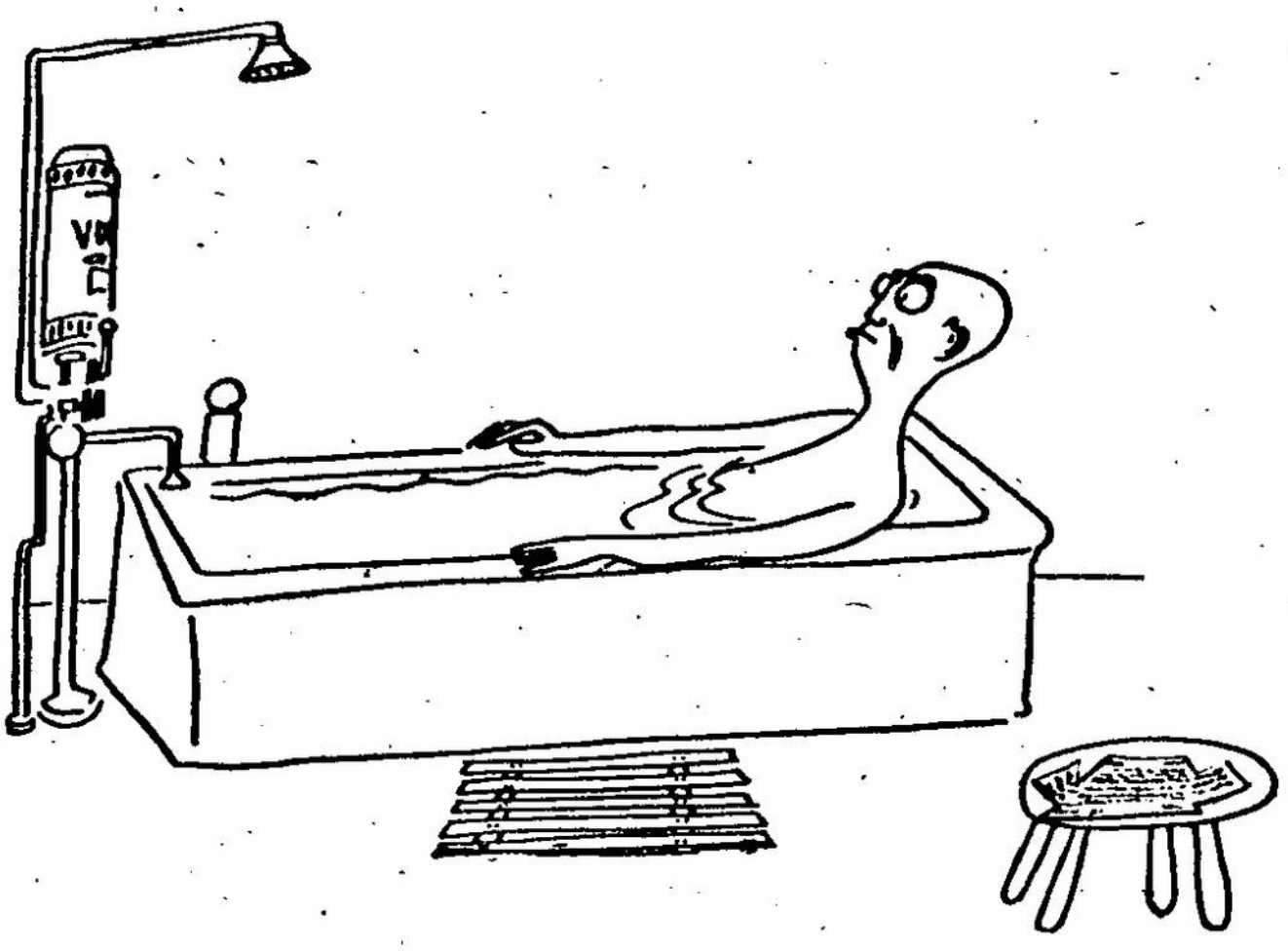
from America, the place where the most exciting things continually happen in life as well as in books. Someone there—a colleague unknown—had translated the stories of *The Street where the Heart Lies*, and the telegram was from a New York publisher, who was certain that the stories would be successful, as a book, on the stage, in the cinema, and on television. The prospects were tremendous. The publisher most anxiously wanted more stories of the same kind.

At last Monsieur Saint Juste relaxed. He folded his hands behind his head and he contemplated the vagaries of existence.

Now that at long last he had himself experienced an exciting true story, formidable and filled with action, a story of an innocent suspect, of mistaken identity and the police present en masse, the publishers of that incredible country across the ocean asked him to write more stories of the Street where the Heart Lies.

As Monsieur Saint Juste started to soap himself, he sighed, as authors do, no matter what good fortune visits them. He realized, with overwhelming sadness, that his future lay in writing about the small, peaceful happenings; not, as he would like, about large, dramatic designs.

With a philosophic turn of mind he said to himself as he relaxed further into his bathtub, " I suppose that in America so much happens all the time that the little events of the quiet rue Gît-le-Cœur are wonderfully fresh and restful."



CLAIMANT

I know evil when I see it

by ELIZABETH BOWEN

IT BEGAN, out of the blue, with Arthur's getting the letter from Australia. "Why look," I said, looking through the post, "I didn't know we knew anybody *there*!"

"Nor we do," said Arthur, turning it over.

"Well, go on, dear," I remember saying, "open it. It won't bite you."

Those used to be sunny mornings. The house faced east, over the estuary, and I used to open the windows early in order to air out the smell of paint. We'd moved in the day the workmen went out, and everywhere was as fresh—lovely!

The house, though ancient, felt new to us—sometimes we had to laugh, Arthur and I. Look at us, married thirty-five years and setting up all anew like a boy and girl! It *had* been a step to take, leaving Wimbledon Park: I know there were many who thought us crazy.

"Whatever will you do with yourselves," I was asked, "right away off by yourselves down there?" As they should know, Arthur was cracked on sailing, and asked no better than gardening when ashore. "No doubt, but how will *you* pass the time?" they would go on.

Since I first knew Arthur, he'd dreamed of the West Country. We'd departed there for our honeymoon, also holidays. So the day came when he sold his business, and sold it well—having himself built it up, he deserved to. So, having no one to come after us, we took what was now our capital and moved west. Compensation for our having had no family was we felt free to realize our long dream.

I don't think I ever saw such a happy man. I make myself always remember that.

We'd been in the house three weeks when the letter came. July. It was drowsy weather, dulling over sometimes in the afternoons but again bright throughout those evenings. Time passed itself—how, I now could not tell you. I know I had not yet got the curtains up. But what matter? We went to bed before dark. And outdoors, nothing but the water, and

across that nothing else but woods going steep up, as they did also behind our house. Few from the village came that way. No one to look in on us—so we thought!

By that same post, I got a letter from Mary. Forgetting Australia for the moment, I was deep in her everlasting news when I heard Arthur sharply exclaim. And when he told me, I did not wonder. For what the man wrote to say was that the house had had no business to be disposed of. It was his, he claimed, under his uncle's will—his uncle being the late P. St. J. Hobart. Of that, of course, we could not make head or tail. Arthur'd gone into everything most thoroughly before signing.

True, old Mr. Hobart had been the owner of the house, as had his ancestors before him—he'd indeed died there. But died what is called intestate. His lawyers, whom Arthur dealt with over the purchase, were altogether satisfied as to that. The old fellow *had* made a will, which was in their keeping, but then one day he came round and asked for it back and destroyed it under their very noses. They asked him, should they draw up another, but all he did was stride out. He returned no more—having shortly afterwards passed away. As he no doubt knew, he had nothing to leave but debts: all the lawyers found, when making their search, was bills. So the house had to be sold to pay off those—mainly local people. (Fancy their letting credit run on like that. He traded on their good feeling, did Mr. Hobart—also, I've no doubt, on his ancient name.)

Sad, it seemed, as a story, but straightforward. By all accounts old Mr. Hobart was the last of his line. No word as to any nephew arose. "What does he call himself?" I wondered.

"He signs himself P. St. J. Hobart."

"Arthur, those lawyers *can't* have made a mistake?"

"Not they," said Arthur. (And a man knows.) "No, this chap hasn't a leg to stand on."

"You mean," I said, "he's simply trying it on? Or else he's an impostor, I shouldn't wonder."

"Whoever he is," said Arthur, passing me the letter, "he knows this place. Seems to know it like the palm of his hand."

So the man did. It was a peculiar letter, partly insulting—he spoke of "a pack of robbers"—partly aiming to play upon our feelings. The place, he told us, was the scene of his boyhood. He'd lived his life, he said, his miserable life, with one hope only—to return. He wrote, *It's my fate, my passion, and my inheritance.* MINE. *And no one shall cheat me of it.*

I said, "Well, my goodness. I mean, really . . ."

Arthur said nothing.

"In fairness," I said, "his uncle ought to have told him."

"Maybe they fell out," said Arthur. "You never know. There's a lot goes on in those old families."

"Arthur, you ought to send this on to the lawyers," I said. "Let them write him—what else are they for? In the first place, he should have written to them, instead of attempting to play *us* up."

Arthur once more said, "Hasn't a leg to stand on."

I said, "Look, dear, this has nothing to say to us. So do kindly put this out of your mind." For I saw he couldn't.

"Can't but pity the chap."

"Stop it, do!" I cried.

"He hasn't a hope," said Arthur. Later, I saw him go down the lawn. He stood there and looked up, then down the water, then around at the trees. He always went off by himself when he felt badly.

You never know the whole of a man's mind. Now, too late, I can see what upset Arthur. He was taking on on behalf of this Hobart heir because of the way *he* cared for the place, himself. Arthur almost cared for the place past reason—strange, to feel that way so late in life. You never come to the end of knowing a man—at one time, I should not have thought Arthur had it in him. From the moment we first set eyes on the place, it got him.

It may have been partly the situation. You came on it round a turn of the valley, suddenly—just the house, the water, and the trees going up. The lawn sloped to the estuary, and there was a jetty—high and dry that day, for the tide was out. "Well," I said, "I'm glad that mud doesn't smell." For something told me this was to be our home. I read our future in Arthur's face.

To return to that letter. Arthur did what I said—that is, sent it on to the lawyers. What I was not to know was that Arthur also wrote to the man himself. Oh, he would have done better to keep out of it! Not that he intended to give encouragement. No, he meant only, he later said, to assure the man that the old home was at any rate in good hands. But Arthur could never express himself on paper—therefore, the nephew took him to be gloating. By return air mail from Australia, Arthur received what read like the work of an angry maniac—had it not been I who took in the post, Arthur'd I'm sure have hidden *that* letter from me. As it was, share and share alike. I asked, "Think he'll go for us with a gun?"

For the nephew was to be with us shortly. Yes, he was coming flying back from Australia in order to thresh the whole matter out. He expected, he wrote, to be taking the next plane

after the one bearing us his letter . . . We went, of course, to the lawyers. *They* weren't much help—they hummed and hawed, fidgeted and looked sideways.

Nor were the village people better. A close lot—smugglers, I shouldn't wonder. They'd been all right so far—they got our custom—but old neighbourhoods are apt to be queer to newcomers. Up to then, I and Arthur had never noticed. But of course that village was in league with the Hobarts. How they knew that nephew was coming I could not tell you—but *they* knew all right. We read it in every eye.

So there we were, left with this hanging over us.

Now it was to come to a fight, Arthur rightly hardened. "While and if that fellow continues his present attitude," he told me, "not a word will I hear. I am never walking out, and I'm never selling out. And that's final."

And when Arthur says so, it is.

Then, another morning, we ceased to worry.

Arthur picked up the newspaper—then half put it down again, shaken. I looked—there'd been one of those dreadful air crashes, somewhere halfway across the world. On the route from Australia. All lives lost. Arthur took back the paper and ran his thumb-nail down the passenger list. Among those listed was P. St. J. Hobart.

Arthur and I were ashamed to voice our relief. Later, he walked away down the lawn. The lawyers came on the telephone. "Yes, *I* know," I said, "don't tell me."

That evening, our floorboards started to be torn up. A clock was moved from in front of a sliding panel. Thrown out in heaps were our clothes and papers, from drawers and cupboards, during the crazy search. Night and day it went on. I heard him, Arthur heard him, but neither of us ever caught him at it. Seldom did we enter into a room which was not disturbed, seldom a room he had not just left. How could we doubt who it was?

"Maybe if we aided him, Arthur, it might stop this?" I once said. Arthur would have no truck. Myself, it came to the point where I spent hours, secretly, looking for that will—only to make certain it was not there. "It's no *good*!" I found myself standing shouting, at the bottom of the stairs, so's to make myself heard in every part of the house.

But P. St. J. Hobart was not yet ready to give over.

I had the idea of summoning the vicar. Though not a churchgoer, I hear the clergy have powers. However, his wife sent word he was on holiday.

At the start, we remained outdoors as much as we could, leaving the premises to P. St. J. Hobart on chance he might

weary and be still. We now seldom saw the sun; it was sultry weather. The trees became dark as though full of smoke.

To distract my mind, Arthur would take me boating, up-river out of sight of the house. Or with sandwiches we would make off into the farther woods—sitting our backs up against some tree, Arthur would take my hand in his, then one after the other we'd doze off: we had sleep to catch up with. Nothing but the humming of the insects—till a bird would scream, off away down there. Soon, I could see, our absences chafed Arthur: he could not agree to them on principle. He was right—a man should stay by his own home.

The first *sight* I had of P. St. J. Hobart was in the distance. Coming back one of those evenings from the woods, we saw him standing there in the doorway, as might the owner. He was tall, bald, and wore a curious smile. As we approached, he vanished inside. Though he continued for some time to fight shy of us, we from then on saw him go past the windows.

Then came the evening when he took a long look in at us. The window was closed, for the dusk was damp, due to sea mist come up the estuary. He put one hand flat against the pane—through the glass I beheld his teeth and his eyeballs. Not only that but I saw him laugh. "Arthur," I said as quietly as possible, "dear, let's shut the shutters, shall we?"

Somehow I'm never comfortable being laughed at. Also, his manner reflected upon Arthur.

Yet you could pity him, there alone.

I should explain that what Arthur never considered, for one moment, was our quitting the house. He was not for our yielding an inch. He took this trouble up as he might a challenge, saying, "No, what's good enough for him is good enough for me." The night Hobart gave me a fright in bed, Arthur did ask if I'd care to go for a change to Mary's. "What," I said, "and leave you? No, I know where *my* place is!"

Giving up looking for the will, P. St. J. Hobart turned his attention upon us. Nothing we did escaped him. Finding we did not go away, he commenced studying us for his own reasons. Wanting, was he, in some way to come to terms? I put it to Arthur, whether we could not. Arthur replied, "Not while he continues his present attitude." I pointed out that P. St. J. Hobart had all but given up sneering: he'd remain quite quiet in the corners of rooms or rove through our woodlands quite inoffensively, or stand by the water much as did Arthur. He knew his way in the dark. He was back home.

For my part, I should not have objected to having a bachelor in the house—had he been a living one.

That was what was the matter. That was what put out Arthur. Arthur could never tolerate what was not above-board. "I'd deal fair and square," he said, "with any living man." Such had been his rule throughout his business days: to do otherwise would not have been himself. "All I ask," he said, "is a *living* man. As it is, I call this a dirty trick." He felt himself taken advantage of by P. St. J. Hobart.

"Well, you can't blame *him*, Arthur. Blame that air crash!"

But with Arthur, it was the principle of the thing. Till he'd had this out he could not enjoy his home. Could not settle to anything till he'd cleared this up. He was hit, you understand, right in his sense of property. He said, "I'll have this out with him, if I die."

So it was Arthur, from that day on, who took to going after P. St. J. Hobart. *Arthur* would creep and look suddenly through a window to see whether P. St. J. Hobart was in a room, *Arthur* would stand hour-long in our doorway, watching to see who'd come out of our woods. Or bang down his teacup and dart outdoors—in vain: he'd come back ever so crestfallen.

"Never mind," I'd say, "he's just a Slippery Sam."

For P. St. J. Hobart would never face Arthur squarely. No sort of satisfaction would he give. Wherever Arthur was not, Hobart would be—all the place was queer with that smile of his. Get us out?—No, he'd done better than that. May have been his revenge, may have been his fun.

Looking back, one thing's strange: no such word as "ghost" ever passed Arthur's or my lips. No, not even when we all but quarrelled. Only all but quarrelled, P. St. J. Hobart brought about no rift between my dear Arthur and me. I trust I shall always remember that. After thirty-five years?—No, it wasn't possible. It was just that Arthur was such an upright man, who could not sit down under what seemed wrong, whereas I am the easy-going sort—live and let live.

So the thing preyed on Arthur.

The end came suddenly.

I don't care to speak of it, so I'll tell you shortly. All that day, it was gathering up for thunder. Stifling and awful. So dark indoors that to get through in the kitchen took all my morning—I don't know when it was that I dished up dinner. Arthur barely spoke and had little appetite: he sat as usual in the master's chair we'd bought with other furniture in the house—and now and then behind Arthur's shoulder I caught a glimpse of P. St. J. Hobart. After, for some hours I don't remember: I put my feet up on the living-room sofa to snatch a nap, but went

deep asleep. The storm breaking woke me. P. St. J. Hobart sat on the end of my sofa, tipping towards me his bald head. He never had come so near before.

He came nearer, showing me his white eyes.

Well, I knew evil when I saw it. I cried out, but the thunder was like great guns. Right overhead. Then I could not see for the lightning—I don't know therefore for how long Arthur'd been planted there in the door. Down, down the dark rain came, smacking on the water of the estuary: it was full tide.

Hobart gave such a laugh as I never heard, but backed off the sofa. "You needn't go," said Arthur, "I want a word with you"—he spread his arms, barred the one way out of the room. At last he'd got Hobart into a corner.

P. St. J. Hobart did not so much as trouble to laugh again. He walked straight through Arthur, out of that door. Arthur made a grab at his own chest, almost unbelievingly. Then he turned, with no word to me, and went after Hobart.

I'm so stout, I stumbled as I ran to the window. Hobart, shimmering in the lightning, waited for Arthur to come up with him—through the downpour I watched them come face to face. Like that they stood, as they never had. What began to pass, I shall never know. Hobart broke it off, moved away, Arthur always after him. Arthur again overtook him near the lawn's edge, raised his fist, and struck out—battling at air.

P. St. J. Hobart strolled off away down the jetty. Lightning flashed a white sheet onto the water, over which Hobart walked forward, on. Arthur, however, fell where the jetty ended. What remained was the roaring storm and the racing water into which my dear had gone like a stone.

Not till the following day did they bring home Arthur.

More than peaceful his face was, satisfied. Nothing more on his mind, he had said his say. He had had it out.

I suppose I got through on the telephone to the village. I know I was not left alone long. A death finds you friends, wherever you are. Somebody wired Mary and she came, and it was with her that I went away. Never to return.

So there is that place, for whoever wants it. Once again for sale, for I need the money. Empty or not empty, I cannot say. Who is in possession, I do not ask.

★ ***Houses have always haunted Elizabeth Bowen: her novels are peopled by them! Herself the first woman to inherit Bowen's Court, the Irish estate given by Cromwell to her ancestors, she loves her home and even enjoys polishing her own antique furniture . . .***

Hark! how all the welkin rings
Glory to the King of Kings!

Now gladdeth every living creature,
With bliss and comfortable Gladness
The heaven's King is clad in our nature . . .
The lamp of joy, that chases all darkness,
Ascended is to be the world's light,
Born of the glorious Virgin Mary bright.

Who ever in earth heard so blythe a story?
Or tidings of so great felicity?

WILLIAM DUNBAR, c. 1465–1530

Comfortable Gladness

They sat down by the huge fire of blazing logs to a substantial supper, and a mighty bowl of wassail, something smaller than an ordinary wash-house copper, in which the hot apples were hissing and bubbling with a rich look, and a jolly sound, that were perfectly irresistible.

"This," said Mr. Pickwick, looking round him, "this is, indeed, comfort."

"Our invariable custom," replied Mr. Wardle. "Everybody sits down with us on Christmas eve, as you see them now—servants and all: and here we wait, until the clock strikes twelve, to usher Christmas in, and beguile the time with forfeits and

old stories. Trundle, my boy, rake up the fire." Up flew the bright sparks in myriads, as the logs were stirred, and the deep red blaze sent forth a rich glow, that penetrated into the furthest corner of the room, and cast its cheerful tint on every face.

"Come," said Wardle, "a song—a Christmas song."

CHARLES DICKENS, *Pickwick Papers*

Sheppardes Song

To Bethlem did they go, the shepherds three:
To Bethlem did they go to see
whe'r it were so or no,
Whether Christ were born or no
To set men free . . .

As I out rode this enderes night
of thre joli sheppardes I saw a sight,
And all abowte ther fold a star shone bright;
They sang terli, terlow,
So merili the sheppards ther pipes can blow.

Doune from heaven, from heaven so hie,
of angels ther came a great companie
with mirthe and joy and great solemnitie;
They sang terli, terlow,
So merili the sheppards ther pipes can blow.

Before The Manger

Now three years before (1223) . . . it befell that Saint Francis was minded, at the town of Greccio, to celebrate the memory of the Birth of the Child Jesus, with all the added solemnity that he might, for the kindling of devotion . . . He made ready a manger, and bade that hay, together with an ox and an ass, be brought to the place. The Brethren were called together, the folk assembled, the wood echoed with their voices, and that night was made radiant and solemn with many bright lights, and with tuneful and sonorous praises. The man of God, filled with

tender love, stood before the manger, bathed in tears, and overflowing with joy.

Solemn Masses were celebrated over the manger, Francis, the Levite of Christ, chanting the Holy Gospel. Then he preached unto the folk standing round the Birth of the King in poverty, calling Him, when he wished to name Him, the Child of Bethlehem, by reason of his tender love for Him.

ST. BONAVENTURE

Kinges From The East

Three Kinges came from the east country,
Which knew they by astronomy
They offered him gold, myrrh, incense;
He took them with great diligence.

They turned again full merrily,
Each came unto his own country
O Dei mirabilia,
They had heaven's bliss at their ending,
The which God grant us old and young.
Deo Patri sit gloria.

Shann MS

Christmas Day

Down to the chappell again where Bishopp Morley preached upon the song of the Angels, " Glory to God on high, on earth peace, and good will towards men."

Methought he made but a poor sermon, but long, and reprehending the mistaken jollity of the Court for the true joy that shall and ought to be on these days, he particularised concerning their excess in plays and gaming . . . Upon which it was worth observing how far they are come from taking the reprehensions of the Bishopp seriously, that they all laugh in the chappell when he reflected on their ill actions and courses. He did much press us to joy in these public days of joy, and to hospitality.

The sermon done, a good anthem followed with vialls, and then the King came down to receive the Sacrament . . .

I walked home again with great pleasure, and there dined by my wife's bedside with great content, having a mess of brave plum-porridge and a roasted pullet for dinner, and I sent for a mince-pie abroad, my wife not being well to make any herself yet.

SAMUEL PEPYS,
Diary, 1662

A WINTER TALE

" The story is known to be more than gossip," he said, shivering a little

by WILLIAM BUCHAN

"AND that is all I have ever been able to discover about Deborah Martin—poor child." The Rector laid down his glasses and looked past me at the frozen day.

"I don't know," he went on, "that it really should be any concern of mine, although, even in these days, we have our dark passages. Village life . . . and we're so remote here. But somehow," he shivered a little, "I've always hated this story, knowing it to be something more than gossip, although— " he looked at me in kind confusion—"although, of course, he *was* your great-grandfather, and therefore . . . "

He was silent, and the fire in the warm, smoky study fluttered steadily, like a quick pulse.

"Even in family life we have our dark passages." I smiled to show that the memory of George Ayres, over so many years, was not a tender one. I rose to go, buttoning up my overcoat.

The Rector's hospitality had been very pleasant; the December day would make me no concessions.

"You will forgive me for not coming with you?" said the Rector anxiously, and as anxiously I reassured him. It would have been a brutal thing to have dragged him from his rare leisure, his warm room, on a day like this.

"You'll find the grave very easily. It's by the corner of your garden wall on the north side. A little stone slab, next to nothing on it. I don't even know who put it there—perhaps you do?"

"I've guessed," I said, "but I can't be sure. Anyway, Rector, I'm extremely grateful to you. I don't know how long it will be before we meet again. Perhaps, one day, if I ever make any money, I'll be able to open the house."

The Rector said cordially that he hoped so, and I, because it was such cruelty to keep him any longer from his chair by the fire, went out to do the last of the tasks which I had set myself.

The day was in the very no-man's-land of winter, the world a catacomb buried away from warmth and light, muffling all sound, dark and cold, without hope. Bare trees stood up against

the sky, symmetrical, and still as moss in agate; and the sky was lustreless grey marble, grey almost to black where it appeared to end, a mile away, beyond the thick low line of the woods.

My footsteps flapped heavily and squeaked on the yellow gravel path, sugared with rime, which led from the Rectory to the church. A bitter day, I thought—harsh and unregarding; but I was warm, I was alive. I had come from a warm room, a warm life, and could, when I wished, go back to them. For her, for Deborah Martin, what warmth had there ever been, who went from cold heart to cold grave?

I went into the church through a door of torn red baize. On this quiet day the inside of the church was a cavern of ice, but there was in its air a faint remembrance of humanity, something lingering from the multitudes of worshippers. There were creakings, the slow stretching and settling of woodwork. It was more friendly than the day outside.

The memorial tablet to my great-grandfather was set in the chancel wall, a great oblong of white marble, chilly, pompous, and indifferent as the man himself. Hypocritical too, though with the hypocrisy of others.

I stood and gazed at it, the flagstones like slabs of ice striking at my blood through my shoe-leather. Although my feet were soon numb, I went on reading what they had had to say about George Ayres.

A Generous Husband. Emily, his wife, went mad and died by her own hand, leaving some words of illumination in a diary, which were the reason for my visit.

A Devoted Father. Devoted to whom, I wondered. For an idiot quarrel George Ayres dismissed his son to live abroad, and but for the entail, would have willed everything away from him.

A Just Landlord—the old rigmarole. Possibly he was just, such men quite often are, but what a word—the poorest of all words of praise, without the least connotation of humanity: plain *just*, the least you dare to be under the law and your neighbours' eyes.

I marvelled that those who knew him should have thought George Ayres worthy of this expensive tribute. They were moved, no doubt, by fear of death, and of what might come to be said of them when they too were dead. Also, they would be superstitious; the thought struck me sharply. Quite possibly there was a desire to propitiate, a certain fear of him. Even after death.

All in all, though, this tablet was a conventional specimen. There was nothing on it to excite a collector of the naïvetés of

the period. In smaller black letters at the bottom I read that *This Stone was Erected by his Sorrowing Friends.* His sorrowing friends! One of my questions was answered, for surely this must mean those charming gentlemen, Doctor Parken, Colonel Jameson, Parson Whyte, who spent so many evenings at the Hall in my great-grandfather's time with cards and bottles, and—

Deborah, my dear, I would have saved you if I could . . . I am Charles . . . but it was George Ayres who saw you first that morning in May. I am of his blood and you must hate me too.

Parson Whyte was hanged eventually. Dr. Parken must have left the neighbourhood, though I do not know when, for he was not buried here. Jameson was killed out hunting some years after George Ayres had died in his bed, on January 9th 1835, sorrowed over by his friends.

I had not been in this church since childhood. When I was ten the house was shut up and we went to live in India. It did not seem to me likely that the house, now mine, would ever be opened again. Nothing had come to me with it but papers, piles of papers, among them the diary of poor Emily, wife of George Ayres, who killed herself in the spring of 1834. These papers contained nearly all the family history I knew—my parents had cared nothing for it. A little more had been supplied by my antiquarian friend, the Rector, just now.

It was those few entries in Emily Ayres's diary, entries oblique and allusive as though the diarist looked over her shoulder as she wrote, which had so powerfully moved me. For long after reading them, I had struggled with a feeling of guilt, appalling and surely unfair, since any guilt must be my great-grandfather's. Perhaps it was fitting that I, last of my family and indifferent to its survival, should be thus oppressed by the need—not to expiate a crime; how could I?—but to mitigate that guilt a little with my grief, on my family's behalf.

It must seem absurd enough, but I could not see the absurdity. Something far stronger than any mere abstract feelings of regret and disgust had possessed me after reading the diary of Emily Ayres. It was as though a voice spoke in my brain, reiterating, "There will be no peace for you—no rest—until you have made amends."

Yet what on earth was there that I could do? Nothing, except possess myself of all the facts I could lay hands on and then—well, then, from a heart painfully charged with pity, try to make some expression of it which might reach that pitiable ghost. A pitiful heart, mine, and full of strange love. There was the truth of it. The guilt, the remorse I knew belonged to my great-grandfather. The love was my own.

I had had enough of George Ayres's memorial tablet. My feet were nearly paralysed. I shuffled and stamped them on an iron grating, which gave out a reverberating groan. Looking round among the many monuments of my wretched family, I could find no mention whatever of Emily. She, who must once have been a hopeful, laughing girl, had madness and oblivion for her portion when she married George.

The short afternoon was fading, its grey light striving for entrance with lead and stained glass. Dusk was among the pillars of the nave, and at the west end, beneath the wooden gallery, it was already dark. I went out into the churchyard.

Deborah, I am coming.

There had been no change in the quality of this iron-bound day. The light, which seemed to filter to it from so far off, was losing strength. The grey stones were nearer black, the blacks more richly so. Still the motionless air seared and bit with its promise of snow.

I took the path that skirts the tower and winds away to where the garden wall of the house juts out among the graves and there is a small green door for the family's use.

This story that obsessed me had been played out more than a century ago. What was I doing, what did I expect to do, in coming here today? I might dislike loose ends, filaments of hatred and anguish still persisting in darkness; a cry for help drawn out fine and still echoing; dislike them I did. That in itself would not be strong enough. The stronger compulsion remained. I had set myself to tie up loose ends, to soothe a pain that was an echo of pain, to right a gross wrong done before I was born. I had no notion of what it would be good for me to do, and small hope of not making matters worse for myself.

I trod the path of uneven grey flags, moss-mortared, between mounds of grass, and barrelled Elizabethan tombs canted at every angle. I told myself that I must appear very comical, walking through this graveyard of graveyards on this malign day, hesitating and turning and pacing back. Such brisk admonishing, however, had no effect, was a last effort on the part of my every-day self. I did not feel comical, but was wholly wrapped up in my tremendous preoccupation. The day and the place, with its cypress and yew and laurel under yew, if they had not existed in fact would have been brought to birth in my mind. All things worked together.

Given an obsession like mine, not answerable to reason, such externals were inevitable.

It is plain truth that, at midwinter, May seems impossibly

far away. It is not only the poet who wonders anxiously if it will ever come again. Something in a December day is so adamant and seems so enduring. The months ahead are a weariness to contemplate; the process of regeneration looks unbearably slow.

I stared at the long black line of woods on the ridge to the south, and tried to imagine them in late spring, frilled with bright green and full of birds. For it was in May that George Ayres rode over from the Hall to speak to Job Martin, his forester, " about the Park fences."

On that day, May 16th 1832, is an entry in Emily's diary, slipped in between some village matter and an urgent query about the after-life.

He has kept his word! This evening, at half past nine, a strange girl was brought in—by the garden door. So now I am to be flouted in my own house . . . He admits no shame . . . Tonight he requires me to retire early. He is expecting guests . . .

Was it chilly and overcast that morning, or was it, as I cannot help seeing it, radiant with blue and gold over the little clearing in the woods?

In my mind's eye the sky is infinitely blue, the sunlight streams down the rotten thatch of the cottage, the short, soft turf, the scattered hens and children; upon Job Martin, big and sullen and sly, and his wife, silent and terrified.

But where were you, Deborah? Were you in the woods, where the light warm wind came seeking, and the sunlight struck down between the branches in straight gold bars, and the white anemones danced? Did they send a little brother or sister to call you? Or did you stand beside your mother in your ragged holland frock, looking with wonder at the tall man on the horse, with his blue chin and long nose, who eyed you so greedily?

I think of it as a lovely day because afterwards, for me as for Deborah Martin, a darkness falls. The days are not fine again.

What passed between the forester and his master, whether of words or money, I do not know, but clearly some arrangement satisfactory to both parties must have been concluded early on that day, since Deborah was delivered up to her master the same evening. I could only read between the lines of Emily's diary and, from my knowledge of my great-grandfather and of his time, guess—more or less accurately.

On May 17th Emily again bursts out; her misery and bitterness, hatred for her husband, and—oddly—a true and unselfish pity for the girl in her house, pushing up like strong plants through the heavy slabs of religious sentiment which are the chief matter of her journal.

The Gentlemen left at midday, thank God, though they will surely return. My husband has confined me to my rooms, ordering me not to stir. He is at work in the house . . . I know now who She is: the child of Job Martin, the forester. Such black-hearted parents, I would not wish that God should forgive their wickedness, nor his. I would go to her, but he will never allow it. Oh Lord, be merciful to my weak spirit . . .

And on May 19th:

He has put her in the old rooms in the North Front, next his own. They—his friends—have been here every night. I cannot sleep. I cannot bear the things I hear. May God have pity on the poor child, and punish him and the others in His own time . . . I tried to go to her, to comfort her a little, but he met me and drove me back with blows. It is useless.

So, if there was one to pray for her, there was no one materially to help Deborah Martin, no one at all in a parish of three hundred people, in the fourth decade of the nineteenth century.

Yet it is not to be supposed that people did not talk. Many a tenant going to the Hall on business must have seen a white face between the heavy hangings of a window. Servants would certainly have told their tales. Nevertheless, the whole population of the village and the farms was bound to my great-grandfather in one way or another, either as tenants or employees. Who was there brave enough to speak out, and to whom could he speak? Not to Parson Whyte, certainly, nor to Doctor Parken. The nearest town was many rough miles away. To a Justice of the Peace, then? The nearest Justice was Colonel Jameson, whose estate marched with that of his friend George Ayres, and Colonel Jameson, drunk or sober, was a power in the County.

I can imagine that Job Martin alone was silent, living in his tumbledown cottage up in the woods with his near-starving family—a slatternly household—his roof leaking in the rain, his children growing dirtier and more ragged among the broken crocks and pots of potato-water; but rich enough, at last, to buy the liquor he wanted.

From something in Emily's journal I guess that, in the end, he became troublesome, perhaps even attempting a little inexpert blackmail. He probably tried only this once, for, as I learnt from the parish records, he and his whole family moved that same winter to an unknown destination. My great-grandfather was scarcely a man whom it was wise to threaten.

So, her last links with this earth being gone, Deborah must then have passed wholly into a world of nightmare.

From the few scattered, scrappy sentences in Emily's diary between May 1832 and January of the next year, I have gathered

little direct information but many hints which, added to a small stock of facts from other sources, have told me the course of events between Deborah's imprisonment and her death.

Parson Whyte, who was later hanged for another murder, in addition to being a debauchee of note was also a considerable scholar. He dabbled extensively in the occultism still fashionable at the time and was, I think with my great-grandfather's cold acquiescence, the leader of a miniature hell-fire club which met frequently at the Hall.

To the intellect of George Ayres the diabolism of Whyte may have had some appeal. For Colonel Jameson and Doctor Parken, I suspect it merely served its true purpose as an extra spice to their pleasures. Even an orgy, no doubt, is the better for being organized.

During the last months of 1832, the entries in Emily's diary become more sketchy and hysterical, her appeals to heaven more pathetically frantic. The writing is often shaky and the page blotted.

December 28th. My Husband came to me this morning. He was as cold and unruffled as ever. He has sent the servants away, all but his old manservant, and my Sarah. What can he mean to do? I think I shall not be able to bear this much longer.

The brown handwriting, sloping, faded, and blotched, stood out clearly in my mind's eye.

Then, as in a dissolving film, I saw the next entry, the one for January 4th.

For a whole week now I have been locked into my rooms. What are they doing, and what is to become of her? *They were all here last night, and are here today. My Husband has not been near me for days.*

On the night of January 5th 1833, at about 11.30 o'clock, when old Sarah, Emily's maid, was asleep, and her mistress sitting up reading the Bible, sounds, of which Emily had been nervously conscious all evening, swelled suddenly to a great din of chanting and singing. There came a vast, explosive crash as of breaking glass and one long, thin scream, which faded and died away.

Then silence; for a long time, silence. Then a quick shuffle of feet in the corridor, and a key turned in the lock. Emily started up with a cry to see her husband's terrified manservant, white and twittering in the light of the candle he held.

" Come down, madam! in God's name, come down! "

Emily, made brave by the fear, the hope that something had happened to George, flew down the stairs and burst into the vastness of the Saloon.

During the few seconds before her husband struck her on the mouth and knocked her senseless, the mind of Emily took in a wild impression of the scene; of candles burning by a black altar, of Parson Whyte in a red robe still holding a long knife; of the scarlet, astonished face of Colonel Jameson, his eyes protruding; and among the broken glass of smashed candelabra, amid crumpled linen and spilt wine and blood, the body of Deborah Martin, touchingly still in death.

I think that George Ayres must have received an appreciable shock that night, a distinct jar to his armour of conceit and indifference. He must have been a little frightened, and have had to consider distant retributive forces beyond his control.

At all events, he visited his wife the following morning, spoke kindly to her, explained how she had walked in her sleep and fallen on the stairs, took her to the Great Saloon to show her that all this wild talk of murder and violence was merely the outcome of a particularly bad dream. The *girl*, he added—if it was on her behalf that Emily was worrying—had been sent out of the county two weeks before.

In fact, he and his friends must have collected their wits very rapidly. There was no trace next morning of any disturbance in the Great Saloon. The long winter night was on their side, enabling them to dig some sort of grave in the iron earth, in a quiet corner of the churchyard near the garden door, turf it over, and return before cock-crow. After that, they must have thought the least said the better. Parken would be ready with a death certificate should such a thing be called for, Whyte with the record of a service held, and George Ayres with an account of a girl brought into his house by the charity of his wife, now—alas!—too ill herself to answer questions.

This last would have been true. All that I know of what was done on that January night is contained in the last of the lucid entries in Emily's diary, made two days later. After that, her unhappiness and terror took complete possession of her, and she can never have recovered sanity before her death in the early part of the next year.

One phrase of hers remains with me constantly. Writing of murdered Deborah, she says: *She was Lovely, and if there is any Innocence, she was Innocent. I had but one thought, and that was to thank God with all my heart that she is now at Peace.*

So the old Rector had said to me today, looking at me curiously as if he would like to say more, but did not know how: "She is at rest."

I wished I could believe it.

Dusk was coming on fast. I turned about once more, and made for the north-west corner of the graveyard, and here, not twenty yards from the green door, was the stone slab, sunken in frosty grass, between two bushes of laurel.

My grandfather, George's son, returning from his long exile at his father's death, must have read, and listened, and marked the stony faces of the villagers, and at last salved a not too sensitive family conscience with this memorial.

Deborah—I am here . . . For a long while I stood and gazed at the stone, as though the letters and numbers might form an answer to my queries. As I stood, the troubled feelings I had had for so long mounted and mounted, till I thought I should choke. Not for years had I felt emotion surge so strongly, disturbingly, all through me. My eyes pricked painfully, but no tears came. Such a day might well freeze tears.

Still the afternoon remained unchanged in its flat quiet; it was nothing more than the dead end of a December day, and nothing was coming to me for all my pain. The two laurels were not trees, but green death sculptured, denying their own life. Soon my emotion might leave me, a vacuum within the vacuum of the afternoon; but I could not take my eyes from the inscription: *D.M. 1817–1833.*

As I stood, staring with bent head at this unresponsive gravestone, immobile and meaningless in my posture as the laurels themselves, a sound came, breaking the empty quiet with an airy flutter and a steady beat. I looked up to see a wedge of swans, flying low over my head, and making, with their great wings and the changing pattern of their flight together, a startlingly definite affirmation of life against the dead grey of the sky. They were superb, quite undefeated by winter, and when they had passed, it seemed that the wind of their going had stirred the surrounding air, for I felt a light breeze spring up which touched my cheek and shook the stiff laurel leaves until they, too, almost appeared alive.

Then my contained, violent emotions, half comprehended and quite uncontrolled, burst all barriers, and in an intense passion and confusion I knelt and kissed the rough, earthy surface of the stone. *I bring what warmth I can to you, poor Deborah, who were never warm.*

After some time, how long or short I do not know, a hand was laid on my shoulder. I looked up, thoroughly startled, to see my tall friend, the Rector, looking anxiously down at me. He said, in a very gentle voice, "It is getting dark, you know. I think you should come home now."

I rose and turned to him, and as he looked searchingly and with deep concern into my face, something there must have reassured him, for he lost his look of anxiety and, taking my arm, walked me back to his house, talking briskly and cheerfully to me as we went. He never at that time, or at any other, alluded to his fears for me, nor to the strangeness of my behaviour on that December afternoon. He took me to his warm room, gave me a drink, and talked in an amused, penetrating way of various trivialities of his daily life. He is a very remarkable man.

In truth, he had no need to be anxious for me. I was utterly exhausted by what I had tried to do. Later, I should have to think, to analyse, and to explain to myself. For the present I was calmer and more nearly happy than I had been for many months. I knew that I had wandered far from everyday things and experienced much that was beyond my immediate comprehension. Now respite had come, and with it the ability to plan, to think forward as I had not been able to do for a long time.

Deborah was my love, but from now on her mortality itself would be meaningless to me. Yet . . . something of Deborah, something of the lovely, imprisoned spirit, so savagely used, had lingered, hovered, found its way into my life.

There I was, still empty-handed but—I had now the purest, most unshakable certainty—I should not always be so. Some day, somewhere, the chance was going to be given me to find that spirit made flesh in my own world. If only I could see that chance, be quick enough to recognize and take it, from that moment I could begin to make amends.

★ ***Son of that famous and distinguished writer the late John Buchan whose well-loved novels have given us all countless hours of pleasure, the Hon. William Buchan, brother of Lord Tweedsmuir, contributes his first story to Argosy. His first novel "Kumari," a vivid tale of India, has recently appeared, also a volume of "Personal Poems." He has a country home near Oxford, and an attractive young family of three sons and three daughters.***

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NOT TAKING THE PLUNGE

Long before Manet thought of painting his famous "Bar at the Folies Bergère," a cartoon of the time shows a barmaid with a generous décolletage about to serve a silk-hatted customer. "What would you like to have, sir?" asks the girl. To which the pop-eyed gentleman replies, "M'dear, I simply daren't tell you."

PAUL DERVAL, *The Folies Bergère*

A Man of Parts

He liked to give his wife a pleasurable little shock

by WILLIAM SANSOM

JOHN BLAYNE—Jack Blayne for short, he often laughed—came home one afternoon earlier than usual with several parcels under his arm and on his face the suppressed pleasure of a man burdened with Christmas surprises.

Outside, an occasional bright yellow leaf on wintry branches black and brilliant in low sunlight might have spoken of late November and the festive season to come: but they would have been wrong to speak so, for they were the first yellow leaves of a cold spring. And John Blayne's face always expressed suppressed pleasure, parcels or not.

Was he laughing—as he tumbled the parcels down onto a bed so cleverly upholstered with dyed towelling—in the empty flat? One could never be sure whether he was laughing or not: two deep dimples drove a permanent smile into his cheeks, and what was happening behind the baffle-glass of his thick black-rimmed spectacles few could properly tell. Moreover it was Blayne's habit to deprecate any obvious pleasure in his face with deep ridges engraved in humble horizontal puzzlement across his forehead: and for a very good reason, because it was Blayne's habit, for as many minutes as he could cram into any day, to be amusing.

He it was who sent the brightest greetings telegram—*Congratulations on a son stop may he shine for many moons*—he mixed a cocktail called an Ulcer-Pulser, his car was inscribed *Nemesis* and his poodle was called Mister Poo, he was up to all sorts of tricks. But somehow, although he was so often the life and soul of this or that party, or group of more than one person, he was never loud: he was hugely suave: he approached with an elephantine reticence, a hangdog humility, a real old poker-face. He knew he was in for applause, he anticipated it, he apologized for it. Not he the man to laugh at his own jokes.

Blayne was a tall man with a big fat jaw, black back-plastered hair, heavy black eyebrows, and owl-round black-rimmed spectacles. He wore big dark double-breasted suits that flapped round him like rich and portly tents, and, being a tall man so

conscious of the admiration of others, had grown into a position of looking down at his feet, with his big chin pressed humbly into the knot of his tie. He looked thus either shy or deeply pondering, which latter he certainly was.

He was a " company director," up to a variety of things in a small way, and successful in this: he was a busy man, and it was a credit to his energy that he managed so much time for so many private amiabilities. But then, as a director he was a visionary: quick to foresee, quick to work out a practical mathematic, quick to relegate the rest to others.

But he had wanted to be an actor; this still accounted for much and for his favourite form, among so much else, of entertaining others. This was based on the principle of the shock that vivifies, based in its simplest terms on the schoolboy trick of rushing into the room and yelling: " Crumbs, have you heard? It's all over the house! " And then, to the open jaws and frightened eyes and cries of " What? " and " Where? " the answer: " The roof."

Or: " Heavens—have you heard what the Poles are doing in Russia? " And after a suitable, dreadful pause, the answer: " Holding the telegraph wires up."

Now grown up; Blayne's methods were more involved. He liked, for instance, to give his wife a pleasurable little shock. Once, when he knew she was in another part of the town, he had made certain she " discovered " him walking along the street with a huge bouquet and a bottle of champagne in his arms. He had, in fact, bumped into her, made sure that they executed the little to-and-fro dance of opposed pedestrians, before he raised bewildered eyes to hers.

The chagrin on his face as he stood caught on his way to an assignment in some *garconnière*! His wife's face! And then—after that delicious, that lifetime's pause—he had suddenly bowed and presented her with both bouquet and bottle upon which had carefully been tied labels: *To my darling wife, Esther . . . briefly, most happily encountered . . .* It had been a great success, though he had not liked a certain incredulity in her initial surprise.

Now, undoing his parcels, he was bent on the same game, but with more ordered armament. Big, myopic, secretly dimpled, like a tall thoughtful Buddha in a city suit, he moved about the bedroom carefully extracting stockings and a suspender-belt and other lingerie from cardboard boxes which he then packed away methodically with all the loose wrappings and strings.

He took the stockings, a slip, and a pair of knickers and crushed them, it seemed thoughtfully, in his hands. He took them into the sitting-room and scattered them on the arms of the sofa and

a chair. He pushed great dents into the sofa's cushions, disordered a rug beside it: then moved back the knickered chair to where a standard lamp shone straight down on it.

He put glasses and a bottle of gin on a low table nearby, then moved into the bedroom—always a man alone in a flat, moving as if pulled by a string not of his own thought but of a puppeteer, like a figure alone seen in a lighted window—where he removed his coat and waistcoat, disordered his collar and tie, smeared some of one of his wife's old lipsticks on his lips, picked up the evening paper, and sat down to wait.

But he soon put down the paper—he had picked it up only to stifle his own applause of himself, he was so modest and contained—and began looking at himself and fiddling with all these things he had disordered.

Once he let out a loud chuckle, and then he allowed himself the latitude of a little hum—but quickly frowned and looked over anxiously to the clock. Half past three.

His wife would be returning from her office early and unexpected at four. He had discovered this from her secretary when he had by chance telephoned at luncheon. Since then, having a free day himself, his brain had worked fast.

Mrs. Blayne managed the public-relations department of a florist and fruiterer organization. She was of a mind serious enough to appreciate her husband's odd ebulliencies: for she could never seriously become involved in them, and, as one might appreciate the near-human manœuvres of a large captive bear while recognizing it still to be a formidably savage beast, she was endeared to him by such innocent tricks while still respecting him as man, her husband. Now and again they did, of course, tire her: but generously she put this down to her own unreceptive mood.

At a few minutes past four—thinking that hell, if the Minister hadn't settled that dock strike and shifted Messrs. Bloody Pearson's Jaffas *she* couldn't, and she might as well rest until tomorrow's renewed squabbling on the telephone—she opened her front door and was surprised first to hear bathwater running and then to see the shape of her husband sprawled on the sofa with a bottle of gin in his hand.

"Why, Jack . . . I didn't know . . ." she started—but stopped to see this the signal for her husband to plunge to his feet and stand unsteadily in the middle of the room saying nothing. Then she saw the lingerie draped about and like a calculating-machine her mind registered everything, lingerie, bathwater, lipstick, shirtsleeves, drink; and her stomach dropped.

She had no idea what to do. It was a reality she had sometimes envisaged, vaguely, awfully, comically, but never really.

At last she spoke slowly, very quietly to control her voice. " All right, Jack," she said, " I'll be going out for a bit."

As she turned away he lurched towards her mumbling, " Darling! " and " Don't . . ." but all she felt was a sickness to be away from it and she ran to the front door, not looking at him again, and only sobbing back over her shoulder, " Please clear this up," before she slammed the door behind her.

She heard him open it and shout, now clear and unslurred, " Darling, please come back, I didn't mean it . . ." And supposed that voices cleared up when shouted and if he didn't *mean* it, then he'd been trying awfully damned hard.

He only caught her up a block away, still in his shirtsleeves and breathing hard. He was still wiping the lipstick off on his handkerchief and saying through it, " Sweetest, they're presents for *you*, undies, there's no one there, it was my little bit of fun . . ."

She was so relieved she stopped dead and put herself in his arms. Then so angry she leaned back and hit him hard on the cheek. " Fool! " she shouted. " This time you've gone too far. What d'you think I am? "

" I . . . I only did it for fun. A little t-tableau . . .? "

" And deadly *vivant* you made it, you oaf. Now listen to me . . ."

And for a long time that evening, interspersed with an ashamed pleasure when she actually handled his gifts, which were expensive and exactly to her taste, he had to hear what she thought of a trick in such bad taste. Dangerous taste, too—what about her heart, or fainting, or if she'd gone at him? Silly. Thoughtless, too. Mad, almost—if it weren't so thoroughly juvenile.

He saw what she meant and felt honestly apologetic and not a little foolish. He reserved himself the right to think privately that she was making a mountain out of a molehill: and she, to herself, saw that the very sight of that lingerie nauseated her still and perhaps she was unreasonable. Will I ever bring myself to wear them? she said to herself.

She did. They laughed about it the next day. But the affair was patched up so easily that they were still a little uneasy about it—and for this reason it became, over quite a long period, a ritual method of his presenting to her any surprise gift of clothing. Carefully at first. For instance, the next time he had wanted to give her something he had telephoned her office and said: " Prepare yourself for a little surprise when you get home, my dear."

And she had opened the door to find him acting himself acting

the same scene, and taking care to laugh as he did it—and there had been a small fur wrap for her. Perhaps the very value of the fur had tempted him to risk it. In any case, the matter went off affably.

And, as time went on, he did it again. Thus it became a convention: and they both laughed, as people laugh pleasurably with their private jokes, when he took the trouble to add the most subtle realistic touches. Once, a gramophone record of a woman singing, against bathwater. And again a rumpled bed, with rouge-stained cotton wool and upset powder. Alone in the flat, she had played a kind of grisly hunt-the-slipper until she found the new hat fallen from its supposed perch on the bed-head.

Such private jokes may wither, may expand: with Jack Blayne, by his nature, they expanded. It is difficult enough, and fearful, to think of a respected cabinet minister at baby-talk with his wife: but doubtless this occurs, and, in endearing proportion, Jack Blayne's enormities are easier to understand, and even to believe.

About a year later, Mrs. Blayne was due to visit the West Country on a matter involving orchards in which her company was interested. Her ticket had been bought, she had her case packed, she was ready to leave the office for Paddington—when suddenly the news came through that her main contact in Somerset was indisposed.

It was again a cold spring, the days were epidemic with influenza. She decided to postpone her visit, and, having cleared up her immediate affairs in London, considered a clean desk a good reason to leave the office early. She telephoned her husband at his office to let him know her change of plan, but he was out: she left it to her secretary to try him a little later, and went out for an hour or two's shopping before returning home.

When, at six o'clock, she let herself in, she was delighted to see his hat and coat on the hallstand and hear the sound of him moving somewhere in the flat.

Home, she thought, how lovely to be home. And for a moment looked around—at the dyed pillow-ticking cleverly draped into curtains, the butcher's-apron cloth blue on the sofa, the tubular doorbell and the walls of different patterned papers and the indoor plants and all the other wily exuberances introduced by Jacko to give a bright modern note to this little old house in a near suburb.

She waited while the taxi-man clumped her bag down, paid him off, and then " Jack-o! " she called, and went through to the

sitting-room. He must have come home specially to greet her. But the room was empty.

She saw there were dead leaves on the flowers and picked at them for a second or two, thinking he was in the lavatory; then heard a rustling in the bedroom. He could not have heard her. "Jack-o!" she said again opening the door—and a smell of gin and perfume and hot electric fire welled up sudden as a wall as she entered and saw him standing there in his shirt and suspenders by an unmade bed. The old fool, he was at it again!

But the old *sweet*, she thought, as she went up and kissed him on lips carefully raw with half-eaten lipstick. "My, you've worked quickly!" she laughed, and as he grinned back shook her head and sighed. "You silly great fat old darling—and now I wonder what you've got for me *this* time."

She did not have far to look—a greater variety of things than usual were scattered everywhere, not only underwear but a dress and shoes and a hat and even a new umbrella. She had to sit down on the bed and laugh.

She looked round the room and laughed, wearily but happily, with the kind of laugh that befits a long journey come to its warm tired end, at the very extent of his ponderous playfulness; and at the same time with love for a generosity that must have been prompted by his gladness to have her there back again instead of away. But perhaps he only felt lonely? Yet what did that matter?

And there he was, goggling at her, swaying and playing the thing out all over again just as so many times before! Would he never get tired? He must have sat in the bedroom some time with the gin bottle open to get this smell going.

"Jacko darling, you big dear idiot! But now—*do* stop it! I'm going to get my coat off first and then I'll have a real good look at all you've got me, you old dear."

He still said nothing, but now when she went to the cupboard to hang her coat away he suddenly lurched towards her, a big smile pulling between his dimples.

"No," he said.

Then: "N-n-n-no," he trilled. "No-ski," he playfully added. "Come into the sitting-room, as the spider said to the—"

"But I want to hang my coat—"

"Wait and see what awaits you in the parlour, my love!"

"But I don't see—there couldn't be anything *more*?"

"Come along," he sang.

She followed him, wondering what more there might be and wondering at something strange in his behaviour. Usually he stopped acting drunk at this period. But today he seemed in more

than usually high spirits. She noticed he had whisked his trousers off a chair as he passed out of the room and was now struggling into them as he peered about the room and talked, dragging his braces after him, at the same time.

" Now where—where on earth did I put it, or rather them, or should we say it? Now where? Well, Esther, I can't say how happy I am to see you back, can't say, dear. What happened now? "

He had got his trousers on and was looking at her, she thought, for she could not see his eyes behind their thick lenses, anxiously.

She said: " But surely they told you from the office? "

" The office, of course. Of course they did. But the details, ducks, now *I* want to know *exactly* . . . "

" Well, you see they've got the flu in Taunton and . . . but didn't you bring me in here to show me—? "

" Indeed I did, indeed, *indeed*. But where . . .? " He was looking round and suddenly clapped his hand right over his mouth, struck with momentous dread. " Oh, fool that I am! I've left them there! Left them in the shop! My, what a silly old . . . but there, you've got your coat on, wait a sec, I'll get mine and we'll both hurry down and get them . . . "

" Get what? "

" Them. Wait. You'll see. Down in the High Street. Two ticks! Just a sec! "

He was bouncing about, so jolly, so full of whatever surprise he had that she had no time to say more before he was in the bedroom again. She smiled, puzzled a little, a lot more weary. It's for their defects, she thought, that's what we love them for. And this made her feel quite warm. Then she followed into the bedroom—and found him scribbling something on paper. " Now Jack, what's that, what are you up to? "

" Oh, nothing. Just—just a note of something, something I forgot struck me . . . Dudley's Nuddly Mints . . . "

She reached out automatically for what he had written and then seeing him draw it away grabbed it—automatically? playfully? And read aloud: *You've got ten minutes. Put on something of* hers. *Explain later.*

She looked up at him, more puzzled than ever. " Dudley's Nuddlies? Put on something . . .? What on earth . . .? "

" Oh—just—you wouldn't understand. It's just—an ad., part of an advertisement, sort of strip cartoon, plot, balloons, somebody says this . . . "

" Well, I don't know, Jack . . . you do seem to be all over the place . . . "

" Come on, darling, hurry."

But her eye had glanced at, and now gripped the dress hanging over the dressing-stool. She went over to it.

" But Jack, whatever made you get me *this* thing? Your taste's usually so . . . greeny-blue and with this terrible skirt . . . where d'you think we live, the rue de la Paix? It's not *my* style . . . and you've crumpled it so, they'll never take it back . . . and Jack, this *hat*, you'll have me looking like a tuppenny tart . . . this *bow* . . . look, look at it on me . . . oh my heavens, what a sight . . ."

And then, as she faced herself in the mirror, giggling at her face wrapped in what seemed smashed blue aeroplane propellers, she saw in the side frame of the mirror a woman standing naked. She took little notice of this, and went on giggling at the hat.

A second later the hat was snatched off her head and a voice pitched sharp and hard shouted, " I'll thank you for that! "

She turned round, remembering with a shock what half her mind had been slow to appreciate in the mirror, to see that a real large live naked woman was standing a foot away from her, glaring at the hat now in her hand: " It's a very pretty hat," this woman said haughtily, " and it cost the earth."

Mrs. Blayne somehow stammered, " W-e-ll! " and then, near fainting, furiously surprised, but noticing instantly that this woman had a dyed streak in her hair and that one breast hung lower than the other, turned to her husband and mouthed slowly to his startled spectacles, " Ja-ack! What on earth . . ."

But before she had finished, the woman had started again. She had paused only for breath and to pick up her clothes and though naked among those other two clothed, and therefore of less consequence, disarmed and curiously insignificant where one might have expected extreme significance—against these odds her very fury gave her a dominant stature as now she snapped at them.

" I can stand the cold and the dark and that damned silly cupboard. I can even take this old fool's simpering at you. *N-n-n-no-ski*," she chanted, and then shouted, " but what I can't stand is a woman like you criticizing *my* clothes.

" What," she said through pressed lips, rolling her girdle on, pacing from one foot to the other to do it, stamping out a slow hornpipe, " what the hell do you mean by *tart*? What's wrong with this dress? It's a very nice dress. It's a lovely dress. It's one of the nicest dresses I've ever had. Just because you've never looked farther than your miserable High Street, you needn't think nobody else has. Not your style? Thank God it isn't, that's all I've got to say.

" That's *all*," she said, going straight on—" And I suppose you think this petticoat's not naice stayle, eh? Well, just for your

information, it came from the very best house in Brussels, the *very* best, it came from—oh damn, this stocking's laddered, that's this bungling idiot here—"

Mrs. Blayne had risen to her feet and at last her long held breath came. " Get-out-of-my-HOUSE! "

" I'm getting," the woman snapped. " I wouldn't stay in your lousy house if you asked me. Not if you went down on your knees and *begged* me—"

" As if *I'd* beg you—"

" Then I'll thank you not to." The woman grunted for a moment, with her arms back on her brassière clasp. And then snatched up the dress.

She was shivering with fury. Her eyelids were set lizard-close on sharp brown eyes, she whipped each word out through clenched teeth, working her mouth savagely to show them, and two doll-red patches flushed her cheekbones. She was a good-looking woman, and looked twice so in this impressive anger that now spat, " You see this stitching, and d'you see this pannier, this grosgrain? You call *that* tarty, do you? *Look* at it . . ."

Mrs. Blayne suddenly found herself peering forward to look —and quickly drew back. " What do I care what—"

" Exactly! You don't care! You couldn't care, could you? You wouldn't *know* how to care, you mean, and I'll tell you straight this dress came from a fifty times better place than that old brown thing you've got on, that eensy-weensy bit of old rag."

" Well! "

" I wouldn't be seen dead in it." And her head disappeared mumbling still into the dress so that she stood there a moment like a giant snail-headed monster, loose arms flying about, faceless, stockinged legs stamping anonymous beneath, while absurdly Esther Blayne stood drawn up like a waiting modiste while her husband extended a pleading hand towards her and coughed.

It was the first time, in some degree, that they had been alone together since the intrusion of this uncomfortable stranger and now Blayne coughed again and tried to look at his wife, tried to look lonely and undone, to appeal to whatever clemencies might be in her, like a naughty boy confessed. But what could he say? He coughed a third time and said, " I am sorry, my dear."

At which the great flailing peacock snail burst into louder mumbling: " So *you're* sorry, are you? " and the head of streaked wild hair sprouted out, the hands went everywhere straightening and patting, she took a loud hissing sniff and went straight on, never stopping, " So you're sorry. You're not sorry for me, are you? Showing me up to Mrs. Know-all here, Madame Vogue-I-don't-think. Well, Mrs. Harpers—what do you think of it

now? now it's on? Fit naicely? A bit in here? Perhaps you'd like to measure the bloody hemline? Perhaps you think it's a bit—"

Mrs. Blayne suddenly yelled, " Stop it! "

And the woman spun round and shouted back even louder: " Outré! " And she jammed her hat on, not waiting to look in the mirror, and screamed, " And outré's where I'm going, thank you very much! " and strode out.

They heard the front door slam, the declining clatter of stamped heels.

There was a silence.

Then Mrs. Blayne, without looking at her husband, walked over to the cupboard and reached under the hanging dresses for a suitcase. She took down two or three dresses and began folding them.

Coldly she said, " You seem to have overplayed your realism this time, Jack."

For a long dreadful second a smile stretched over Mr. Blayne's face, behind his spectacles his eyes darted quick all over the room as the wild possibility occurred to him—he had *hired* the woman, *hidden* her, coached her in this act of absurd righteous anger, a stroke of genius, it was *the best thing ever* . . .

" Oh no, you don't, Jack," his wife's voice came, and he saw she was staring at him and his smile died. He remembered that naked figure. No, it wouldn't wash. Wouldn't wash? A little giggle—even then—started automatically somewhere inside his double-breasted tent, but sputtered out like a wet match in the rain of this awfulness dooming the room.

" What—what are you doing? " he said, knowing well that she she was packing.

" Going away."

He stuttered. " But you can't, you really *can't*." He went over to her convinced, as the guilty party, of the insignificance of his little misdemeanour compared with this major attitude of cold and awful retribution. " Darling, please listen to me, it was nothing really . . ."

She looked at him calmly. She was sick of being calm but it was impossible to be otherwise, the situation was too serious for ordinary rage. " I'm going away," she said. " Not for ever. Just for a few days "—and she was thinking, perhaps all those other occasions of the " presents " were a kind of cover, in case she might find this or that trace of a woman—" I'm not sure for how long—".

His spirits had risen in immediate relief at her " not for ever."

" But where are you . . . ? " he said.

" I'm not telling you. Maybe I've got a little something up my sleeve, too."

" You've got *what* . . . ? "

" But you'll never know. At least I've a certain discretion. I'll be back—oh, in a few days. This," she looked up and stared straight into his eyes, " is *my* little joke."

When she had finished packing and had telephoned for a taxi he followed her out into the street and still protested while she handed her case to the driver. He found himself helping her with it, it was quite heavy.

" Good-bye," she said coldly and shut the cab door. " Just drive ahead," she told the driver.

He was left standing there, and suddenly thought, " Follow that cab? " But of course, there was no other cab about.

A week later she returned. She refused to tell him where she had been. Over the days, the weeks, months, he often pleaded with her. He believed it was the uncertainty that was so awful —forgetting that uncertainty is at least one stage better than the awful affirmative.

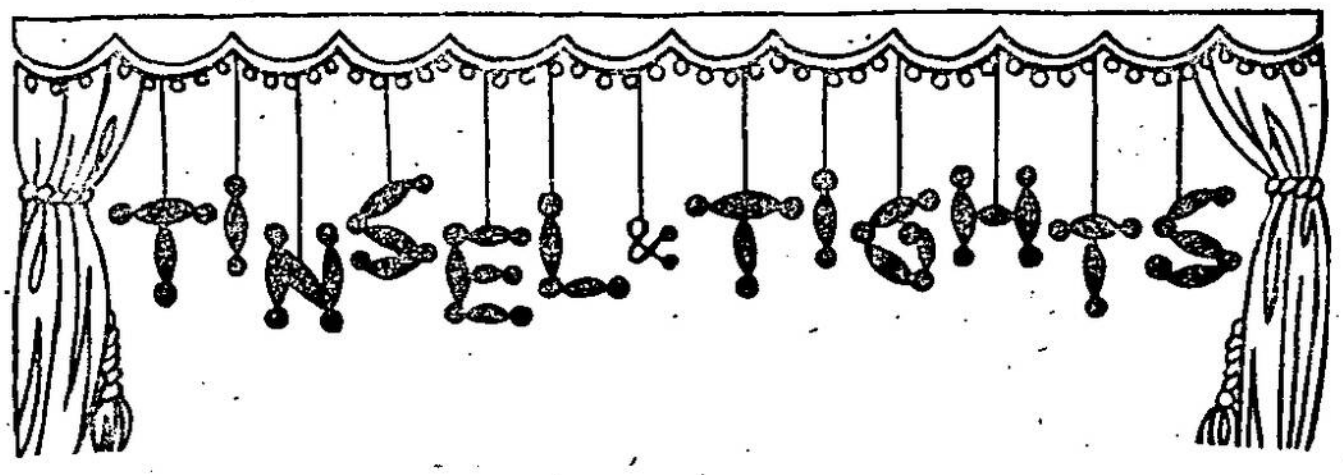
Not until some three years later did she in fact relent—for it was now so long ago—to tell him, yet with a glint of mischief in her eye, that nothing had happened, that she had simply gone away to a quiet hotel by the sea and there had rested and tried calmly to think things out.

It was, in fact, so long ago that when on the quiet he tried to check this up, the hotel management had changed and nobody could help him. Never, throughout his life, can he *know*. Most of that huge good humour has left him. Her little joke was quite successful. She had laughed last, and, for better or for worse, best.

★ ***William Sansom lives in St. John's Wood, where he is busy on his thirteenth book. His twelfth, " A Contest of Ladies," will be out shortly.***

Born in London in 1912, he went to school at Uppingham, and attended Bonn University. Winner of literary prizes and a scholarship, he has travelled extensively. Served throughout World War II as a full-time London fireman.

Has been writing since the age of seven, so that his small son, Nicholas, aged six months, has a few years to go before starting to follow in father's footsteps. His attractive pets include a tortoise known as Mabel, and a cat called Edward.



He cries: " Go on—begin, begin!
Turn on the light of lime
I'm dressed for jolly Old Christmas in
A favourite pantomime! "

W. S. GILBERT, *At a Pantomime*

Principal Boy

She was an exceedingly handsome young person—what is usually known as " a fine figure of a woman," . . . she somehow suggested a bottle of champagne at a school-treat. She would have made an admirable Principal Boy in a pantomime. As a matter of fact, she had been one.

IAN HAY, *Pip*

Stocking Up

We're paid to expose to the popular eye
Our faces and forms, and we have to comply.
But we know we look sights
In these heliotrope tights,
And, apart from the tights, we are shy:
So although we are waving our legs in the air,
You'll kindly oblige us by looking elsewhere.

Don't look at us!
We are so shy
Be generous
And hide your eye.
Ignore, we beg, the shapely leg
We coyly kick before us.
We do it just because we must—
We are the Shrinking Chorus.

A. P. HERBERT, *Don't Look at Us*

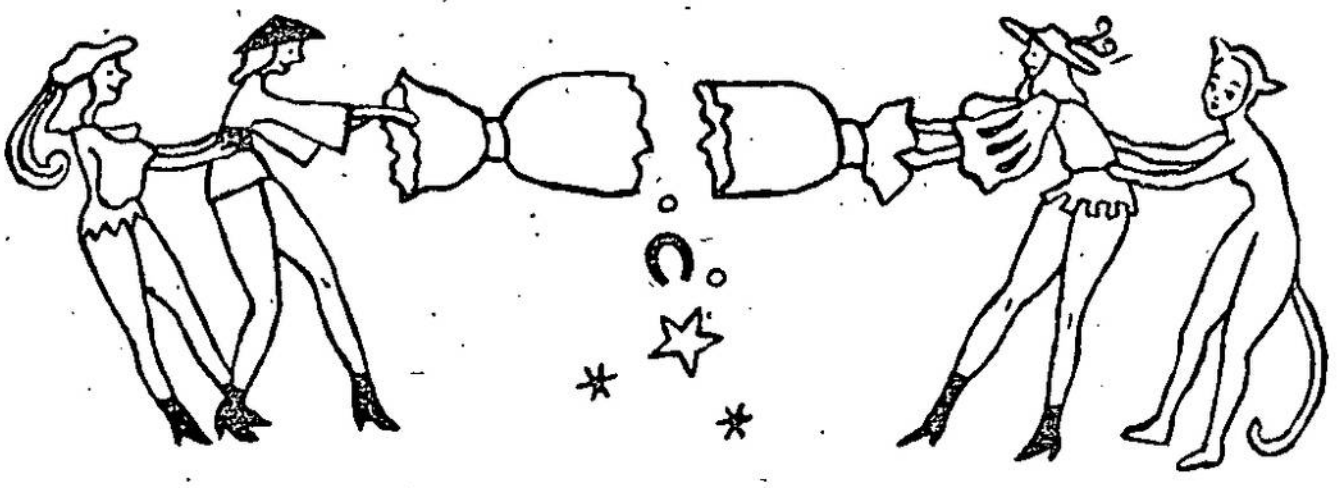
Spangled Spirit

Presently he returned, bringing with him the Spirit of Bow Bells, a big bonny lady robed in her silver sequin bodice, and short bell-shaped skirt above pink tights; she had silver curls, and carried a wand with a chime of bells dangling from its tip.

G. B. STERN, *Little Red Horses*

Pantoguide

Aladdin, for lyrical Chinese legs
And laundry scenes with lashings of eggs.
The Babes in the Wood, for Ye Villagye Greénes
And villainous uncles and Fairy Queens.
Cinderella: magnificent Pompadour balls
And unladylike jokes in baronial halls.
Dick Whittington: mob-caps and Aldermen's daughters
And a frolicsome Puss with unbridled hind-quarters.
For frills and lights and spangles and tights
And genuine Cockney Arabian Nights,
For stereoscopics and scenes from the tropics
And naughty allusions to popular topics,
For ballads sublime, in dubious rhyme,
There's nothing so good as a Pantomime.



Transformation Scene

The real Transformation Scene, of course, was the enthralling show, in the annual Pantomime, which came on before the final Harlequinade. Like some exquisite supernatural growth weaving itself into grottoes and arbours of an incredible loveliness, gigantic ferns and flowers rose slowly from the stage or descended from the flies. On some of them opulent princesses and fairies languished precariously. The whole moving scene glittered with a summer frost, and, while it moved, the light changed miraculously from green to blue, from blue to rose, from rose to blazing orange.

MARTIN ARMSTRONG, *Victorian Peepshow*

Demon King

Black it stood as Night
Fierce as ten Furies, terrible as Hell
And shook a dreadful dart: what seemed his head
The likeness of a kingly crown had on.

JOHN MILTON, 1608–1674,
Paradise Lost

Comic Turns

The first thing was a most dreadful blood and thunder thing . . . Poor Erny put his head down on my lap when he expected any firing, or whenever the chief comic character, a beadle with a very red face, was on the stage, whom he seemed to think quite as alarming as any of the murderers.

HENRIETTA LITCHFIELD,
Emma Darwin

Fairy Godmother

So she, sad victim of domestic spite
Fair Cinderella, past the wintry night
In the lone chimney's darksome nook immured,
Her form disfigured and her charms obscured.
Sudden her God-mother appears in sight,
Lifts the charm'd rod, and chants the mystic rite;
The chanted rite the maid attentive hears,
And feels new ear-rings deck her listening ears;
While 'midst her towering tresses, aptly set,
Shines bright with quivering glance, the smart aigrette;
Brocaded silks the splendid dress complete,
And the Glass Slippers grasp her fairy feet;
Six cock-tail'd mice transport her to the ball
And liveried lizards wait upon her call.

JOHN HOOKHAM FRERE,
1769–1846

The Mountain Without A Name

Higher than Everest on Earth
the snows glowed red in the sun

by ROBERT SHECKLEY

WHEN Morrison left headquarters tent, Dengue the observer was asleep with his mouth open, sprawled loosely in a canvas chair. Morrison took care not to wake him. He had enough trouble on his hands.

He had to see a deputation of natives, the same idiots who had been drumming from the cliffs. And then he had to supervise the destruction of the mountain without a name. His assistant, Ed Lerner, was there now. But first he had to check the most recent accident.

It was noon when he walked through the Work Camp, and the men were taking their lunch break, leaning against their gigantic machines as they ate sandwiches and sipped coffee. It looked normal enough, but Morrison had been bossing planetary construction long enough to know the bad signs. No one kidded him, no one griped. They simply sat on the dusty ground in the shade of their big machines, waiting for something else to happen.

A big Owens Landmover had been damaged this time. It sagged on its broken axle where the wrecking-gang had left it. The two drivers were sitting in the cab, waiting for him.

"How did it happen?" Morrison asked.

"I don't know," the chief driver said, wiping perspiration from his eyes. "Felt the road lift out. Spun sideways, sorta."

Morrison grunted and kicked the gigantic front wheel. A Landmover could drop twenty feet onto rock and come up without a scratched fender. They were the toughest machines built. Five of his were out of commission now.

"Nothing's going right on this job," the assistant driver said, as though that explained everything.

"You're getting careless," Morrison said. "You can't wheel that rig as if you were on Earth. How fast were you going? forty? fifty?"

"We were doing fifteen miles an hour," the chief driver said.

"Sure you were," Morrison said.

"It's the truth! The road sorta dropped and twisted sideways—"

"Yeah," Morrison said. "When will you guys get it through your thick skulls you aren't driving along the Indianapolis speedway? I'm docking you both a half-day's wages."

He turned and walked away. They were angry with him now. Good enough, if it helped take their superstitious minds off the planet.

He was starting towards the mountain without a name when the radio operator leaned out of his shack and called, "For you, Morrie. Earth."

Morrison took the call.

At full amplification he could just recognize the voice of Mr. Shotwell, chairman of the board of Transterran Steel. He was saying, "What's holding things up?"

"Accidents," Morrison said.

"*More* accidents?"

"I'm afraid so, sir."

There was a moment's silence.

Mr. Shotwell said, "But *why*, Morrison? It's a soft planet on the survey. Isn't it?"

"Yes, sir," Morrison admitted unwillingly. "We've had a run of bad luck. But we'll roll."

"I hope so," Mr. Shotwell said. "I certainly hope so. You've been there nearly a month, and you haven't built a single city, or port, or even a highway! Our first advertisements have appeared. Inquiries are rolling in. There are people who want to settle there, Morrison. Businesses and service industries want to move in."

"I know that, sir."

"I'm sure you do. But they require a finished planet, and they need definite moving-dates. If we can't give it to them, Universal Construction can, or Earth-Mars, or Johnson & Hearn. Planets aren't that scarce. You understand that, don't you?"

Morrison's temper had been uncertain since the accidents had started. Now it flared suddenly. He shouted, "What in hell do you want out of me? Do you think I'm stalling? You can take your lousy contract and—"

"Now, now," Mr. Shotwell said hurriedly, "I didn't mean anything *personal*, Morrison. We believe—we know—that you're the best man in planetary construction. But the stockholders—"

"I'll do the best I can," Morrison said, and signed off.

"Rough, rough," the radio operator murmured. "Maybe the

stockholders would like to come out here with their little shovels?"

"Forget it," Morrison said, and hurried off.

Lerner was waiting for him at Control Point Able, gazing sombrely at the mountain. It was taller than Everest on Earth, and the snow on its upper ranges glowed red in the afternoon sun. It had never been named.

"Charges all planted?" Morrison asked.

"Another few hours." Lerner hesitated. Besides being Morrison's assistant, he was an amateur conservationalist, a small, careful, greying man. "It's the tallest mountain on the planet," Lerner said. "Couldn't you save it?"

"Not a chance. This is the key location. We need an ocean port right here."

Lerner nodded, and looked regretfully at the mountain. "It's a real pity. No one's ever climbed it."

Morrison turned quickly and glared at his assistant. "Look, Lerner," he said, "I am aware that no one has ever climbed that mountain. I recognize the symbolism inherent in destroying that mountain. But you know as well as I do that it has to go. Why rub it in?"

"I wasn't—"

"My job isn't to admire scenery. I hate scenery. My job is to convert this place to the specialized needs of human beings."

"You're pretty jumpy," Lerner said.

"Just don't give me any more of your sly innuendoes."

"All right."

Morrison wiped his sweaty hands against his trouser leg. He smiled faintly, apologetically, and said, "Let's get back to camp and see what that damned Dengue is up to."

They turned and walked away. Glancing back, Lerner saw the mountain without a name outlined red against the sky.

Even the planet was nameless. Its small native population called it Umgcha or Ongja, but that didn't matter. It would have no official name until the advertising staff of Transterran Steel figured out something semantically pleasing to several million potential settlers from the crowded inner planets. In the meantime, it was simply referred to as Work Order 35.

Several thousand men and machines were on the planet, and at Morrison's order they would fan out, destroy mountains, build up plains, shift whole forests, redirect rivers, melt ice-caps, mould continents, dig new seas, do everything to make Work Order 35 another suitable home for the unique and demanding technological civilization of homo sapiens.

Dozens of planets had been rearranged to the Terran standard. Work Order 35 should have presented no unusual problems. It was a quiet place of gentle fields and forests, warm seas and rolling hills.

But something was wrong with the tamed land. Accidents happened, past all statistical probability, and a nervous camp chain-reacted to produce more. Everyone helped. There were fights between bulldozer men and explosions men. A cook had hysterics over a tub of mashed potatoes, and the book-keeper's spaniel bit the accountant's ankle. Little things led to big things.

And the job—a simple job on an uncomplicated planet—had barely begun.

In headquarters tent Dengue was awake, squinting judiciously at a whisky and soda.

" What-ho! " he called, " how goes the good work? "

" Fine," Morrison said.

" Glad to hear it," Dengue said emphatically. " I like watching you lads work. Efficiency. Sureness of touch. Know-how."

Morrison had no jurisdiction over the man or his tongue. The government construction code stipulated that observers from other companies could be present at all projects. This was designed to reinforce the courts' " method-sharing " decision in planetary construction. But practically, the observer looked, not for improved methods, but for hidden weaknesses that his own company could exploit. And if he could kid the construction boss into a state of nerves, so much the better. Dengue was an expert at that.

" And what comes next? " Dengue asked.

" We're taking down a mountain," Lerner said.

" Good! " Dengue cried, sitting upright. " That big one? Excellent." He leaned back and stared dreamily at the ceiling. " That mountain was standing while Man was grubbing in the dirt for insects and scavenging what the sabre-tooth left behind. Lord, it's even older than that! " Dengue laughed happily and sipped his drink. " That mountain overlooked the sea when Man—I refer to our noble species, homo sapiens—was a jellyfish, trying to make up its mind between land and sea."

" All right," Morrison said, " that's enough."

Dengue looked at him shrewdly. " But I'm proud of you, Morrison, I'm proud of all of us. We've come a long way since the jellyfish days. What nature took a million years to erect we can tear down in a single day. We can pull that dinky mountain apart and replace it with a concrete-and-steel city guaranteed to last a century! "

" Shut up," Morrison said, walking forward, his face glowing.

Lerner put a restraining hand on his shoulder. Striking an observer was a good way to lose your ticket.

Dengue finished his drink and intoned sonorously, "Stand aside, mother nature! Tremble, ye deep-rooted rocks and hills! Murmur with fear, ye immemorial ocean seas, down to your blackest depths where monsters unholy glide in eternal silence! For Great Morrison has come to drain the sea and make of it a placid duck-pond, to level the hills and build upon them twelve-lane super-highways complete with rest-rooms for trees, picnic tables for shrubs, drive-ins for rocks, filling-stations for caves, billboards for mountain streams, and other fanciful substitutions of the demigod Man."

Morrison rose abruptly and walked out, followed by Lerner. He felt that it would almost be worth while to beat Dengue's face in and give up the whole crumby job. But he wouldn't do it because that was what Dengue wanted, what he was hired to accomplish.

And, Morrison asked himself, would he be so upset if there weren't a germ of truth in what Dengue said?

"Those natives are waiting," Lerner said, catching up with him.

"I don't want to see them now," Morrison said. But distantly, from a far rise of hills, he could hear their drums and whistles. Another irritation for his poor men. "All right," he said.

Three natives were standing at the North Gate beside the camp interpreter. They were of human-related stock, scrawny, naked, stone-age savages.

"What do they want?" Morrison asked.

The interpreter said, "Well, Mr. Morrison, boiling it down, they've changed their minds. They want their planet back, and they're willing to return all our presents."

Morrison sighed. He couldn't very well explain to them that Work Order 35 wasn't *their* planet, or anyone's planet. Land couldn't be possessed—merely occupied. Necessity was the judge. This planet belonged more truly to the several billion Earth settlers who would utilize it, than to the few hundred thousand savages who scurried over its surface. That, at least, was the prevailing philosophy on Earth.

"Tell them again," Morrison said, "all about the splendid reservation we've set aside for them. We're going to feed them, clothe them, educate them—"

Dengue came up quietly. "We're going to astonish them with kindness," he said. "To every man, a wristwatch, a pair of shoes, and a government seed catalogue. To every woman, a lipstick, a bar of soap, and a set of genuine cotton curtains. For

every village, a railway station, a company store, and—"

"Now you're interfering with work," Morrison said. "And in front of witnesses."

Dengue knew the rules. "Sorry, old man," he said, and moved back.

"They say they've changed their minds," the interpreter said. "To render it idiomatically, they say we are to return to our demon land in the sky or they will destroy us with strong magic. The sacred drums are weaving the curse now, and the spirits are gathering."

Morrison looked at the savages with pity. Something like this happened on every planet with a native population. The same meaningless threats were always made by precivilized peoples with an inflated opinion of themselves and no concept at all of the power of technology. He knew primitive humans too well. Great boasters, great killers of the local variety of rabbits and mice.

Occasionally fifty of them would gang up on a tired buffalo, tormenting it into exhaustion before they dared approach close enough to torture out its life with pinpricks from their dull spears. And then what a celebration they had! What heroes they thought themselves!

"Tell them to get the hell out of here," Morrison said. "Tell them if they come near this camp they'll find some magic that really works."

The interpreter called after him, "They're promising big bad trouble in five supernatural categories."

"Save it for your doctorate," Morrison said, and the interpreter grinned cheerfully.

By late afternoon it was time for the destruction of the mountain without a name. Lerner went on a last inspection. Dengue, for once acting like an observer, went down the line jotting diagrams of the charge pattern. Then everyone retreated. The explosions men crouched in their shelters. Morrison went to Control Point Able.

One by one the section chiefs reported their men in. Weather took its last readings and found conditions satisfactory. The photographer snapped his last "before" pictures.

"Stand by," Morrison said over the radio, and removed the safety interlocks from the master detonation-box.

"Look at the sky," Lerner murmured.

Morrison glanced up. It was approaching sunset, and black clouds had sprung up from the west, covering an ochre sky. Silence descended on the camp, and even the drums from nearby hills were quiet.

"Ten seconds . . . five, four, three, two, one—now!" Morrison

called, and rammed the plunger home. At that moment, he felt the wind fan his cheek.

Just before the mountain erupted, Morrison clawed at the plunger, instinctively trying to undo the inevitable moment.

Because even before the men started screaming, he knew that the explosion pattern was wrong, terribly wrong.

Afterwards, in the solitude of his tent, when the injured men had been carried to the hospital and the dead had been buried, Morrison tried to reconstruct the event. It had been an accident, of course: a sudden shift in wind direction, the unexpected brittleness of rock just under the surface layer, the failure of the dampers, and the criminal stupidity of placing two booster charges where they would do the most harm.

Another in a long series of statistical improbabilities, he told himself, then sat suddenly upright.

For the first time it occurred to him that the accidents might have been *helped*.

Absurd! But planetary construction was tricky work, with its juggling of massive forces. Accidents inevitably happened.

If someone gave them a helping hand, they could become catastrophic.

He stood up and began to pace the narrow length of his tent. Dengue was the obvious suspect. Rivalry between the companies ran high. If Transterran Steel could be shown inept, careless, accident-ridden, she might lose her charter, to the advantage of Dengue's company, and Dengue himself.

But Dengue seemed too obvious. Anyone could be responsible. Even little Lerner might have his motives. He really could trust no one. Perhaps he should even consider the natives and their magic—which might be unconscious psi manipulation, for all he knew.

He walked to the doorway and looked out on the scores of tents housing his city of workmen. Who was to blame? How could he find out?

From the hills he could hear the faint, clumsy drums of the planet's former owners. And in front of him, the jagged, ruined, avalanche-swept summit of the mountain without a name was still standing.

He didn't sleep well that night.

The next day, work went on as usual. The big conveyor trucks lined up, filled with chemicals for the fixation of the nearby swamps.

Dengue arrived, trim in khaki slacks and officer's shirt. " Say, chief," he said, " I think I'll go along, if you don't mind."

" Not at all," Morrison said, checking out the trip slips.

" Thanks. I like this sort of operation," Dengue said, swinging into the leading Trailbreaker beside the chartman. " This sort of operation makes me proud to be a human. We're reclaiming all this wasted swamp land, hundreds of square miles of it, and some day fields of wheat will grow where only bulrushes flourished."

" You've got the chart? " Morrison asked Rivera, the assistant foreman.

" Here it is," Lerner said, giving it to Rivera.

" Yes," Dengue mused out loud, " swamp into wheatfields. A miracle of science. And what a surprise it will be for the denizens of the swamp! Imagine the consternation of several hundred species of fish, the amphibians, waterfowl, and beasts of the swamp when they find that their watery paradise has suddenly solidified on them! *Literally* solidified on them; a hard break. But, of course, excellent fertilizer for the wheat."

" All right, move out," Morrison called.

Dengue waved gaily as the convoy started. Rivera climbed into a truck. Flynn, the swamp foreman, came by in his jeep.

" Wait a minute," Morrison said. He walked up to the jeep. " I want you to keep an eye on Dengue."

Flynn looked blank. " Keep an eye on him? "

" That's right." Morrison rubbed his hands together uncomfortably. " I'm not making any accusations, understand. But there's too many accidents on this job. If someone wanted us to look bad . . ."

Flynn smiled wolfishly. " I'll watch him, boss. Don't worry about this operation. Maybe he'll join his fishes in the wheatfields."

" No rough stuff," Morrison warned.

" Of course not. I understand you perfectly, boss." The foreman swung into his jeep and roared to the front of the convoy. The procession of trucks churned dust for half an hour, and then the last of them was gone. Morrison returned to his tent to fill out progress reports.

But he found he was staring at the radio, waiting for Flynn to report. If only Dengue would do something! Nothing big, just enough to prove he was the man. Then Morrison would have every right to take him apart, limb by limb.

It was two hours before the radio buzzed, and Morrison banged his knee answering it. " Flynn? "

" This is Rivera. We've had some trouble, Mr. Morrison."

" Go on."

" The leading Trailbreaker must've got off course. Don't ask

me how. I thought the chartman knew where he was going. He's paid enough."

"Come on, what happened?" Morrison shouted.

"Must have been going over a thin crust. Once the convoy was on it, the surface cracked. Mud underneath, supersaturated with water. Lost all but six trucks."

"Flynn?"

"We pontooned some men out, but Flynn didn't make it."

"All right," Morrison said heavily. "All right. Sit there. I'm sending the amphibians out for you. And listen. Keep hold of Dengue."

"That'll be sort of difficult," Rivera said.

"Why?"

"Well, you know he was in that leading Trailbreaker. He never had a chance."

The men in the Work Camp were in a sullen, angry mood after their new losses, and badly in need of something tangible to strike at. They beat up a baker because his bread tasted funny, and almost lynched a water-control man because he was found near the big rigs, where he had no legitimate business. But this didn't satisfy them, and they began to glance towards the native village.

The stone-age savages had built a new settlement near the Work Camp, a cliff village of seers and warlocks assembled to curse the skyland demons. Their drums pounded day and night, and the men talked of blasting them out, just to shut them up.

Morrison pushed them on. Roads were constructed, and within a week they crumpled. Food seemed to spoil at an alarming rate, and no one would eat the planet's natural products. During a storm, lightning struck the generator plant, ignoring the lightning conductors that Lerner had personally installed. The resulting fire swept half the camp, and when the fire-control team went for water, they found the nearest streams had been mysteriously diverted.

A second attempt was made to blow up the mountain without a name, but this one succeeded only in jarring loose a few freak landslides. Five men had been holding an unauthorized beer party on a nearby slope, and they were caught beneath falling rock. After that, the explosions men refused to plant charges on the mountain.

And the Earth office called again. "But just exactly *what* is wrong, Morrison?" Mr. Shotwell asked.

"I tell you I don't know," Morrison said.

After a moment, Shotwell asked softly, "Is there any possibility of sabotage?"

"I guess so," Morrison said. "All this couldn't be entirely natural. If someone wanted to, they could do a lot of damage—like misguiding a convoy, tampering with charges, mucking up the lightning conductors . . ."

"Do you suspect anyone?"

"I have over five thousand men here," Morrison said slowly.

"I know that. Now, listen carefully. The board of directors has agreed to grant you extraordinary powers in this emergency. You can do anything you like to get the job done. Lock up half the camp, if you wish. Blow the natives out of the hills, if you think that might help. Take any and all measures. No legal responsibility will devolve upon you. We're even prepared to pay a sizeable bonus. *But the job must be completed.*"

"I know," Morrison said.

"Yes, but you don't know how important Work Order 35 is. In strictest confidence, the company has received a number of setbacks elsewhere. There have been loss and damage suits, Acts of God not covered by our insurance. We've sunk too much in this planet to abandon it. You simply must carry it off."

"I'll do my best," Morrison said, and signed off.

That afternoon there was an explosion in the fuel dump. Ten thousand gallons of D-12 were destroyed, and the fuel-dump guard was killed.

"You were pretty lucky," Morrison said, staring sombrely at Lerner.

"I'll say," Lerner said, his face still grey and sweat-stained. Quickly he poured himself a drink. "If I had walked through there ten minutes later, I should have been in the soup. That's too close for comfort."

"Pretty lucky," Morrison said thoughtfully.

"Do you know," Lerner said, "I think the ground was hot when I walked past the dump? It didn't strike me until now. Could there be some sort of volcanic activity under the surface?"

"No," Morrison said. "Our geologists have charted every inch of this area. We're perched on solid granite."

"Hm," Lerner said. "Morrie, I believe you should wipe out the natives."

"Why do that?"

"They're the only really uncontrolled factor. Everyone in the camp is watching everyone else. It must be the natives! Psi ability has been proved, you know, and it's been shown more prevalent in primitives."

Morrison nodded. "Then you would say that the explosion was caused by poltergeist activity?"

Lerner frowned, watching Morrison's face. "Why not? It's worth looking into."

"And if they can polter," Morrison went on, "they can do anything else, can't they? Direct an explosion, lead a convoy astray—"

"I suppose they can, granting the hypothesis."

"Then what are they fooling around for?" Morrison asked. "If they can do all that, they could blow us off this planet without any trouble."

"They might have certain limitations," Lerner said.

"Nuts. Too complicated a theory. It's much simpler to assume that someone here doesn't want the job completed. Maybe he's been offered a million dollars by a rival company. Maybe he's a crank. But he'd have to be someone who gets around. Someone who checks blast patterns, charts courses, directs work parties—"

"Now just a minute! If you're implying—"

"I'm not implying a thing," Morrison said. "And if I'm doing you an injustice, I'm sorry." He stepped outside the tent and called two workmen. "Lock him up somewhere, and make sure he stays locked up."

"You're exceeding your authority," Lerner said.

"Sure."

"And you're wrong. You're wrong about me, Morrie."

"In that case, I'm sorry." He motioned to the men, and they led Lerner out.

Two days later the avalanches began. The geologists didn't know why. They theorized that repeated demolition might have caused deep flaws in the bedrock, the flaws expanded, and—well, it was anybody's guess.

Morrison tried grimly to push the work ahead, but the men were beginning to get out of hand. Some of them were babbling about flying objects, fiery hands in the sky, talking animals, and sentient machines. They drew a lot of listeners. It was unsafe to walk around the camp after dark. Self-appointed guards shot at anything that moved and quite a number of things that didn't.

Morrison was not particularly surprised when, late one night, he found the Work Camp deserted. He had expected the men to make a move. He sat back in his tent and waited.

After a while Rivera came in and sat down. "Gonna be some trouble," he said, lighting a cigarette.

"Whose trouble?"

"The natives. The boys are going up to that village."

Morrison nodded. "What started them?"

Rivera leaned back and exhaled smoke. "You know that crazy Charlie? the guy who's always praying? Well, he swore he saw one of those natives standing beside his tent. He said the native said, 'You die, all of you Earthmen die.' And then the native disappeared."

"In a cloud of smoke?" Morrison asked.

"Yeah," Rivera said, grinning. "I think there was a cloud of smoke in it."

Morrison remembered the man. A perfect hysteric type. A classic case, whose devil spoke conveniently in his own language, and from some place near enough to be destroyed.

"Tell me," Morrison asked, "are they going up there to destroy witches? Or psi supermen?"

Rivera thought it over for a while, then said, "Well, Mr. Morrison, I'd say they don't much care."

In the distance they heard a loud, reverberating boom.

"Did they take explosives?" Morrison asked.

"Don't know. I suppose they did."

It was ridiculous, he thought. Pure mob behaviour. Dengue would have grinned and said, "When in doubt, always kill the shadows. Can't tell what they're up to."

But Morrison found that he was glad his men had made the move. Latent psi powers . . . You could never tell.

Half an hour later, the first men straggled in, walking slowly, not talking to each other.

"Well?" Morrison asked. "Good hunting? Did you get them all?"

"No, sir," one of the men said. "We didn't even get near them."

"What happened?" Morrison asked, feeling a touch of panic. More of his men arrived. They stood silently, not looking at each other.

"What happened?" Morrison shouted.

"We didn't even get near them," a man said. "We got about halfway there. Then there was another landslide."

"Were any of you hurt?"

"No, sir. It didn't come near us. But it buried their village."

"That's bad," Morrison said softly.

"Yes, sir." The men stood in quiet groups, looking at him. "What do we do now, sir?"

Morrison shut his eyes tightly for a moment, then said, "Get back to your tents and stand by."

They melted into the darkness. Rivera looked questioningly

at him. Morrison said, " Bring Lerner here." As soon as Rivera left, he turned to the radio, and began to draw in his outposts.

He had a suspicion that something was coming, so the tornado that burst over the camp half an hour later didn't take him completely by surprise. He was able to get most of his men into the ships before their tents blew away.

Lerner pushed his way into Morrison's temporary headquarters in the radio-room of the flagship.

" What's up? " he asked.

" I'll tell you what's up," Morrison said. " A range of dead volcanoes ten miles from here are erupting. The weather station reports a tidal wave coming that'll flood half this continent. We shouldn't have earthquakes here, but I suppose you felt the first tremor. And that's only the beginning."

" But what is it? " Lerner asked. " What's doing it? "

" Haven't you got Earth yet? " Morrison asked the radio operator.

" Still trying."

Rivera burst in.

" Just two more sections to go," he reported.

" As soon as everyone's on a ship, let me know."

" What's going on? " Lerner screamed. " Is this my fault, too? "

" I'm sorry about that," Morrison said.

" Picked up something," the radio man said. " Another minute . . ."

" Morrison! " Lerner screamed, " tell me! "

" I don't know how to explain it," Morrison said. " It's too big for me. But Dengue could have told you."

Morrison closed his eyes and imagined Dengue standing in front of him.

Dengue was smiling disdainfully, and saying, " Read here the saga of the jellyfish that dreamt it was a god. Upon rising from the ocean beach, the super-jellyfish which called itself Man decided that, due to its convoluted grey brain, it was superior to all. And having thus decided, the jellyfish slew the fish of the sea and the beasts of the field, slew them prodigiously, to the complete disregard of nature's intent. And then the jellyfish bored holes in the mountains and pressed heavy cities upon the groaning earth, and hid the green grass under a concrete apron.

" And then, increasing in numbers past all reason, the space-born jellyfish went to other worlds, and there did he destroy mountains, build up plains, shift whole forests, redirect rivers,

melt ice-caps, mould continents, dig new seas, and in these and other ways did deface the great planets which, next to the stars, are nature's noblest work.

"Now nature is old and slow, but very sure. So, inevitably, there came a time when nature had enough of the presumptuous jellyfish, and his pretension to godhood. And therefore the time came when a great planet whose skin he pierced rejected him, cast him out, spat him forth. That was the day the jellyfish found, to his amazement, that he had lived all his days in the sufferance of powers past his conception, upon an exact par with the creatures of plain and swamp, no worse than the flowers, no better than the weeds, and that it made no difference to the universe whether he lived or died, and all his vaunted record of works done was no more than the tracks an insect leaves in the sand."

"What is it?" Lerner begged.

"I think the planet didn't want us any more," Morrison said. "I think it had enough."

"I've got Earth!" the radio operator called. "Go ahead, Morrie."

"Shotwell? Listen, we can't stick it out," Morrison said into the receiver. "I'm getting my men out of here while there's still time. I can't explain it to you now—I don't know if I'll ever be able to—"

"The planet can't be used at all?" Shotwell asked.

"No. Not a chance. Sir, I hope this doesn't jeopardize the firm's standing—"

"Oh, to hell with the firm's standing," Mr. Shotwell said. "It's just that—You don't know what's been going on here, Morrison. You know our Gobi project? In ruins, every bit of it. And it's not just us. I don't know, I just don't know. You'll have to excuse me, I'm not speaking coherently, but ever since Australia sank—"

"What?"

"Yes, sank, sank, I tell you. Perhaps we should have suspected something from the hurricanes. And then the earthquakes—but we just don't know any more."

"But Mars? Venus? Alpha Centauri?"

"The same everywhere. But we can't be through, can we, Morrison? I mean, mankind—"

"Hullo, hullo!" Morrison called. "What happened?" he asked the operator.

"They conked out," the operator said. "I'll try again."

"Don't bother," Morrison said.

Just then Rivera dashed in.

"Got every last man on board," he said. "The ports are sealed. We're all set, Mr. Morrison."

They were all looking at him. Morrison slumped back in his chair and grinned helplessly.

"We're all set," he said. "But where shall we go?"

★ ★ ★

MOLAR EXTRACTION

An excellent Way to take Moles. Put Garlick, Onions, or Leeks, into the mouths of the holes, & they will come out quickly, as amazed..

G. MARKHAM,
The Inrichment of the Weald of Kent, 1675

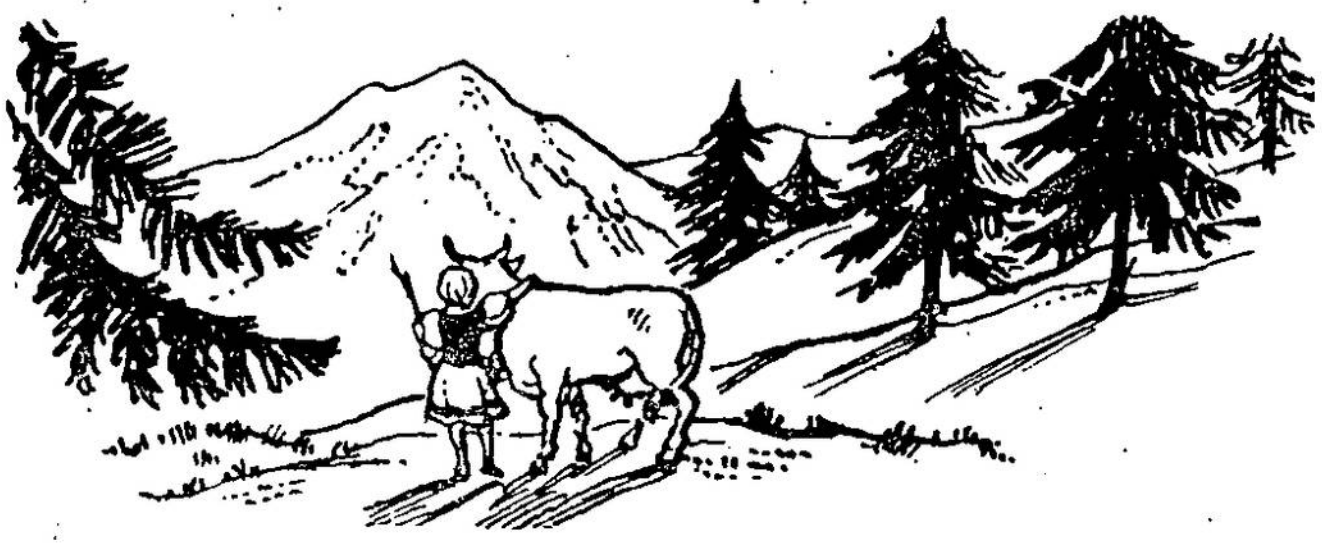
ANSWERS to BOX OF CRACKERS on page 15

1. *Bevy of quails; brood of grouse; covey of partridges; muster of peacocks; nide of pheasants; herd of swans; badelyng of ducks; skein of geese; dale of turkeys*
2. *Gold, frankincense, and myrrh; given by the Three Wise Men, Caspar, Balthazar, and Melchior*
3. *One is in the middle of the Indian Ocean, about 200 miles from Java; the other is part of the Line Islands in the Pacific*
4. *Good King Arthur*
5. *Sir Roger de Coverley*
6. *Ten pipers piping, nine drummers drumming, eight maids a milking, seven swans a swimming, six geese a laying, five gold rings, four colly birds, three French hens, two turtle doves and a partridge in a pear tree*
7. *Nancy Mitford, Sir Max Beerbohm, Somerset Maugham*
8. *M for Sis, I for Novello, S for you, T for Two, L for Leather, E for Brick, T for Two, O for the Sea to Skye, E for Brick*

SOLUTION to ARGOSY CROSSWORD on page 144

Across. 1, *Split second.* 9, *Blue bag.* 10, *Queenly.* 11, *Tiger.* 13, *Main brace.* 14, *Frost-bite.* 15, *Alpha.* 17, *Camel.* 18, *Bailiwick.* 20, *Ingrained.* 22, *Greet.* 24, *Utilize.* 25, *Avarice.* 27, *Landscaping.*

Down. 1, *Stud groom.* 2, *Lob.* 3, *Tegumai.* 4, *Esquire.* 5, *Overbearing.* 6, *Donna.* 7, *Abet.* 8, *Hyde Park.* 12, *Retaliation.* 14, *Factious.* 16, *Prize ring.* 18, *Banners.* 19, *Indiana* 21, *Grill.* 23, *Tree.* 26, *Ali.*



LUDMILA

By Paul Gallico

PART way up the valley from Stëg, in the Principality of Liechtenstein, where the torrent Malbun comes tumbling down its glacial bed from the peaks of the Ochsenkopf and Silberhorn, you will find the shrine of Saint Ludmila, the holy Notburga, that fourteenth-century milkmaid and simple serving-girl who because of her piety, faith, and devotion to the Virgin Mary, became a Saint under her given name of Ludmila.

In a niche cut into the solid rock above the rushing waters is a sweet figure in milkmaid's dress with the golden rays of the sun behind her head in place of the usual halo. She is the patron Saint of the dairymen, the herdsmen, milkers, butter-separators, and cheese-makers, and the taupe-coloured Alpine cattle with the broad heads, curving horns, and large gentle eyes are under her special protection.

Indeed, her connection with such is plain for all to see since beneath the feet of the figure there is affixed the whitened skull and greyish horns of a small cow.

The younger generations, no longer brought up as were their fathers on the legends of the mountains, are unaware of its significance, but many of the local patriarchs remember what they learnt at their mother's knee of the miracle that happened more than a hundred years ago, performed by the holy Notburga, at the time of the annual return of the cattle at the end of the summer from the high pasturage to Vaduz in the Rhine Valley below.

You may still see the gay and colourful ceremony that takes place in Liechtenstein each autumn when the first threat of snow comes to the high passes and the cattle begin to cough in the

Born in New York City in 1897, Paul Gallico, who has a fondness for uninterrupted peace, now prefers to live in the miniature state of Liechtenstein. He loves to cook spaghetti and travel on boats; other passions include fencing, flying, deep-sea fishing, and collecting symphonic gramophone records. Of course you remember his haunting "Snow Goose," and "Jennie," one of the most vivid and sympathetic animal stories.

Argosy readers who enjoyed his charming, wicked Reynardo in "Love of Seven Dolls," will greet with pleasure another of his appealing characters in this new Legend of Liechtenstein.

early gusts of cold wind that sweep down from the Sareiserjoch and the glaciers behind the Wildberg and Panülerkopf.

There is a valley tucked away behind the granite wall of the Three Sisters above Schaan in Liechtenstein, the Saminatal, leading to Malbun, five thousand feet above the meandering Rhine, that is famous for its rich grass and pasturage.

It is the custom of the peasants in Liechtenstein each spring to send their cattle up into the mountains and through the tunnel cut into a quarter-mile of solid rock near Steg that gives access to this hidden, enchanted valley. They go in the charge of herdsmen, dairymen, and cheese-makers, who move up with the beasts, taking their families with them in horse-drawn wooden carts.

There they remain for the entire summer, living in the high Alpine huts, tending the cattle at pasturage, milking them, making the rich yellow cheeses and creamy butter, and keeping careful record of the yield of each animal. There is no contact with the valley below.

The *Abfahrt* or descent takes place on an early autumn morning with the sun shining over the Rheintal, warming the first nip in the clear mountain air. At first there is only the eager chatter of the citizens as they wait, the cries of children at play, and the distant rush of mountain torrents. But then as a deep, hollow booming is heard from the dark recesses of the tunnel, an expectant hush falls upon the waiting throng. It is the sound of the giant bell of copper, cast especially for this occasion and hung around the neck of the leading animal.

Louder and louder grows the clanging as the herd approaches, stiller and stiller the people until with all the drama of a star

actor suddenly bursting upon the stage, the champion of champions emerges into the light and stands for a moment, framed by the dark mouth of the tunnel.

She presents a strange and beautiful sight. Around her soft fawn-coloured neck, suspended from a shining dark leather collar hangs the huge copper bell decorated on all sides with silver hearts and stars and fitted with a silver clapper. This, with her position as leader of the procession, confirms her as best cow of the high pastures, best cow of the summer, best beast in the land.

On her forehead she wears a crimson heart or cross to indicate that her milk or cream has passed the average. But most striking of all, revealing her as first in her herd in yield of milk, butter, and cheese, her one-legged milking-stool has been affixed to the broad and noble head between the graceful sweep of the horns.

It is tied there upside-down like the gay hat of a maid in spring, beribboned with streamers of the red and blue of Liechtenstein, of crimson and white, silver and gold. A wreath fashioned of laurel leaves is woven about her head; cockades of red, white, and blue are at her ears, bunches of meadow flowers make gay the leather of her collar.

One can only gaze at her with astonishment and admiration, for her simple, unobtrusive, natural beauty has been enhanced a hundredfold.

The procession winds out of the long tunnel and down the mountainside, the champions, the next best, the winners in minor classes, each with heart or cross, or milking-stool bound upside-down between their horns; then the horses, garlanded and bedecked, drawing the family carts; the herdsmen and dairymen wearing rosettes of coloured ribbon on their shirts, and crimson and azure cockades in their hats.

God has been good. Saint Rochus and Saint Ludmila, the holy Notburga, have watched over them and kept them from harm. Another year has passed. In the flower-garlanded carts the fat tubs of butter and the cheeses piled high like red and yellow cannon-balls denote prosperity and the wealth that the Creator, through nature, has seen fit to bestow upon his children.

It was in the late summer of the year 1823; the herds were still pasturing in the Malbuntal and Saminatal, but the nights were already growing cool so that their days amidst the rich Alpine grass were numbered, and the time of their annual descent into the Rheintal was not far off.

The setting sun had turned the blue sky a brilliant orange, then soft pink merging to pearl; the plum velvet of night had come out of the east, spangled with stars. The cattle were stamping and lowing softly in the stables nearby, the milking done, and the herdsmen and dairymen gathered about the fire which the crisp air made welcome.

Father Polda had walked up, as was his nightly custom, from his little chapel in Steg, to sit and talk with the men and their

families, for it was mostly under the sun and the stars that he preached or sought the God that he served.

Alois, the chief herdsman, wrapping his cloak around him, rose and awakened the echoes with the mournful cry of the ancient Ave he sent aloft each night: " O-ho! O-ho! A-ve! Ave Maria! "

From the shadowed figures of the herders and dairymen around the fire arose the words and simple melody of the evensong of the herdsmen:

God, the Father, Creator of Heaven and earth,
Give us your blessing, watch o'er our hearth,
Saint Peter, Thou watchman at Heaven's gate,
Shield us from savage beasts; in Thy hands our fate.

The song swelled louder to include the Saints, Theodul, Rochus, Wendelin and Veit, Sebastian and Cyprian, each of whom had particular duties to protect the herdsmen from the manifold dangers of the mountains—beasts of prey, witches, evil spirits, avalanches of rock and snow.

And of course there was Ludmila, *die heilige Notburga*, to whom they sang:

Sainted Ludmila, milkmaid without blame,
Fill every udder; speak thy word,
To grace our beasts and bless our herd . . .

Father Polda smiled in the darkness. None of the Saints had been left out. A big, generous man, he was meticulous with regard to the catalogue of the holy. He was a man of great and simple faith who believed in intercession, the force of prayer, and miracles, unlike chief herdsman Alois, who though professing belief, was hard-headed and, as might be expected of one who lived out in the open and dealt with kine, practical and unsentimental.

Father Polda said, " It has been a good summer—the holy Notburga has done her work well."

Alois grunted in the dark and lit his long curved pipe until the sparks flew. " There has been plenty of rain which has made the pasturage rich and the yield good," he said. " It will be better than last year."

" Thanks be to God and Saint Ludmila who has interceded for us."

Alois grunted again. " Saint Ludmila has not been of much help to Johann Vospelt's weakling. Her yield is far below average. He was cheated when he bought that one."

" Ah," said Father Polda, " the little one with the white muzzle, and the ribs showing. It is a pity. Johann needs the money. He has not been well. He has a wife and small child. They spent all their savings to buy the cow."

" She is hardly worth taking to pasture," Alois declared. " Vospelt would be better off to butcher and sell her. She could not even feed her calf properly. I put it to Schädler's Luzerner champion, who has enough over for a dozen such. There is a beast for you. Butter-fat, twelve per cent, second yield of cream after the first is skimmed . . ." He puffed at his pipe a moment and

added, " There is no animal in the herd that can touch her. She is certain to lead the procession for the second year."

Father Polda did not reply at once, but sat hugging his knees under the black cassock, a huge lump of a man crouched by the fireside, looking up into the starry sky behind which were all his friends, and reflecting. Finally he said in a voice that was singularly soft and gentle to emerge from such a giant, " How unhappy the little Weakling must be. How miserable and wretched. I shall say a prayer for her."

Alois turned and stared at the priest over his pipe. " An animal has no feelings. Pray that Johann Vospelt gets rid of her before she costs him more than she has already."

But Father Polda was right, and Alois was wrong. The little Weakling was most miserable and unhappy indeed. For she was consumed by the hopeless desire to win the right to have her milking-stool bedecked with gaily coloured ribbons tied to her head at the summer's end.

It is doubtful whether she had dared to dream of leading the procession down from the mountainside, wearing the laurel wreath and the big copper bell, for such was far beyond the capacities of a small, not too well-bred cow.

For the sad truth, as she and the herdsman soon learnt, was that her capacity was limited. She was small and thin, and on the whole not to be compared with the huge, sturdy Alpine breeds from whom the milk fairly poured in great, warm, frothy, fragrant streams.

She was not particularly handsome, lacking the broad head, wide-set eyes, and long, curling eyelashes that gave the others the look of slightly ageing beauty queens. She was taupe-coloured, but darker and muddier in shade, thin-flanked and high-legged, and differed further from the others by her white muzzle which made her look even paler and more delicate.

The Weakling tried very hard to be successful, but to little avail. As the weeks passed, she fell further and further behind in her yield. And the more she fretted, the less she seemed to be able to produce.

She took her work seriously, eating heartily, cropping the long, sweet grass indefatigably; she did not take too much exercise, or go climbing to higher pastures. Instead she lay quietly in the shade on hot afternoons, ruminating upon what it would be like to be crowned with the milking-stool and cheered and acclaimed by the people. She chewed her cud carefully; she spent long hours thinking the proper thoughts about motherhood and the responsibility of producing milk.

But no matter how hard she tried, she could not seem to succeed. When the milker came around to her and pegged his one-legged stool into the clay floor of the stable, he would say: " Ach, it is hardly worth while to bring the pail to you, poor little weakling." Nevertheless he would milk her, out of kindness, for he was a good man, but the result would be no more than a third of a pail.

The little Weakling would often turn her head and eye the slender, hand-turned milking-stool, and so great was her yearning that she could almost feel what it would be like to have the stool touch her forehead between her small horns, and hear the rustle of the gaily coloured ribbons as they bound it there. For hours afterwards, as she stood in her stall, the spot on her brow between the horns would ache with longing for the contact.

The reason that the Weakling so greatly desired the reward of the milking-stool was that she was feminine and through no fault of her own had been denied the physique and constitution that would enable her to play the part for which she had been put on earth. She yearned to give lavishly the sweet milk that humans craved for their children and for themselves. And female-like, she desired that adornment on the final day that turned the plainest of cows—which she had the misfortune to be—into the most ravishing creature. Capped with the milking-stool, garlanded with paper flowers of all colours, beribboned in maroon and blue, she was sure she would arouse the admiration and appreciation of all.

What power there lies behind the yearning within the feminine heart; and what mountains have been moved, armies destroyed, thrones toppled, nations devastated, because of that feminine hunger for something bright, such as a ribbon, a bangle, a diamond, a crown, or the glitter in a man's eye.

Can you really believe that such gigantic forces are engendered and shared only by humans, that this desire to be noticed and admired has not its counterpart in the animal kingdom?

If but the hundredth part of a woman's yearning from time to time for something beautiful to place upon her head, or at her throat, or in her ears, or on her back was what the little Weakling was experiencing in her desire to be distinguished as the most successful and desirable of her sex, then she was still the most miserable, the unhappiest, and most forlorn of all cows. For as the summer drew to a close she knew that her chances of succeeding were hopeless.

It did not embitter her, however. It only made her sad, and increased the power of her yearning. She continued to see herself longingly, udders distended with rich, creamy milk, and hear the welcome sound as it frothed into the pail until it was filled to overflowing.

But by the end of the summer, the little Weakling was even more unprepossessing. She was gaunt, ungainly, her gait awkward, her udders slack and all but dry. Only her eyes preserved their luminosity and more than ever were filled with perpetual sadness.

One evening, when the herds had been grazing in the lower Samina valley and were returning to Malbun for the night, Father Polda came forth from his little chapel and joined leathery old Alois for his evening walk, and side by side they marched up the path alongside the mountain torrent, conversing to the peaceful rushing of the water that mingled with the musical jangling and

tonkling of the deep-toned bells around the necks of the cattle.

They discussed the forthcoming descent, the bounty of the year, the prices that would be fetched in the market by the season's yield of butter and cheese, which would mean prosperity for all the valley, all except poor farmer Vospelt whose weakling cow had yielded so little.

Thus the subject of the Weakling was revived, and Father Polda noted that they had already passed the shrine of Saint Ludmila in her niche in the rock. He had meant in passing to say another prayer for the little cow, to ask the holy Notburga to intercede not only for the unfortunate animal, but also for farmer Vospelt who needed the money so much for his family. He realized that it was too late for such intercession to do much good unless by a miracle, but he also believed there was no harm in trying.

They heard a sharp barking, and as they looked back they saw that Alois's dog was yapping at the heels of the poor Weakling who as usual had fallen behind the others in the ascent, and was making no attempt to continue, nor was she paying the slightest attention to the animal baying at her heels.

Instead, as the two men gazed they could see that she had turned broadside to the path and was standing staring across the white-frothed torrent to the figure of Saint Ludmila, or rather the doll-like image of her that had been created by Anton the woodcarver of Steg, many, many years ago.

Since there were no pictures extant of *die heilige Notburga*, the woodcarver had taken the expression he had carved on her face from his own heart, one that had likewise loved the gentle members of the Creator's animal kingdom.

Thus her smile was warm, tender, loving, and yet infinitely pitying too, and invited a similar expression to the lips of all those who passed and paused, and many, seeing her, would murmur, "Dear Saint Ludmila, holy Notburga, give the sweetness and warmth of your protection to me likewise."

And so the two men saw Saint Ludmila smiling down at the little Weakling, and the Weakling standing there, unmindful of the dog, and gazing up at the holy Notburga, her eyes filled with hopeless and gentle pleading as well as the infinite longing and love that filled her being.

Alois said to Father Polda, "Your little Weakling has grown impatient, waiting for your prayers." He laughed good-humouredly. "It looks as though she has decided to ask Saint Ludmila to intercede for her herself. She's gone one ahead of you, Father."

But Father Polda was not amused, for the Saints and prayer were things he took seriously, and he rebuked Alois angrily.

"The Heavenly Father takes all animals both great and small under His shelter," he said, "but He did not give them the capacity to pray. That is for us to do for them, else He would have bestowed upon them the power of speech. You should not joke about such matters."

Alois, who for all his hard-headedness was a believer and was also a little afraid of Father Polda, mumbled in his square brown beard that he had not meant to give offence, whistled to his dog, and they turned up the mountain path again and soon the little Weakling came trotting after.

But this time it was perhaps Father Polda who was wrong, and the herdsman who could have been right.

For a prayer need not be a rhetorical address, or an itemized petition, or lips moved soundlessly inside a cathedral, or even words spoken into the air. A prayer may be a wordless inner longing, a sudden outpouring of love, a yearning within the soul to be for a moment united with the infinite and the good, a humbleness that needs no abasement or speech to express it, a cry in the darkness for help when all seems lost, a song, a poem, a kind deed, a reaching for beauty, or the strong, quiet inner reaffirmation of faith.

A prayer in fact can be anything that is created of God that turns to God.

The little Weakling did not know that she was praying when she paused on the path, her eyes caught by the bright object shining from the niche in the rock. She was aware of nothing but the sadness in her being and her unutterable longing.

The figure in the rocks caught her gentle eyes. She turned to it in the moment when it seemed as though her unhappiness and shame would overwhelm her, and she stood there trembling with the intensity of her desire to be as all the others and know the joy of giving as well as receiving.

And so, in a sense, she made a prayer, and when she had done so, it existed; it was loosed. It was directed at the figure of the one whose love and duty called for her to intercede at the throne; and as with all prayers that arise from the sincere and loving heart, it was both heard and felt in the far corners of the universe. For whereas evil has no power to extend beyond its own radius, the loving trust of a child, or the whispered confession of a sincere and tender heart can alter the stars in their courses.

Surely you do not think that God is angry at the desires of his creatures to win affection and appear beautiful and desirable in the eyes of others. For He Himself loves beauty, since He created so much of it on the face of the earth in both man and beast. And who but He caused the peasants of Liechtenstein to think of something so gay, innocent, and charming as the wreathing of their beasts with laurel and garlands when the year's harvest was garnered, and crowning them with the insignia of their gentle servitude, the milking-stool?

It was the next day, that Alois decided to take the cattle for the last time up to the highest pasture just below the Sareiserjoch where the green slopes are watered by crystal springs that gush from the rocks.

As the herdsmen and dogs marshalled the beasts for the climb,

for the pasture lay a thousand feet above them, his eyes fell upon the Weakling, and he found himself torn between a mixture of annoyance as he remembered the reproof that Father Polda had administered the night before, and pity for the animal that was so thin and generally ill-favoured. He genuinely loved the animals that had been entrusted to his care, and watched over them.

He said to the herdsmen, " Let her be, the little Weakling. She is not worth taking to the high pasture now. She is out of the running for the prizes, anyway. Let her remain down here where she will be safe."

And then he called to his youngest daughter, aged seven, who was playing nearby, and who was named Ludmila after *die heilige Notburga.*

" Ludmila, come here. Look after the little Weakling today and see that she comes to no harm. She is to remain behind. Do not let her stray out of your sight and see that she is back in the stall by sundown."

And with that the dogs were set to work, the herdsmen cried " Heuh! " Beasts and herders set off up the mountain.

Little Ludmila had brown legs and arms, a brown face, and brown hair, but her eyes were as blue as the cornflowers and wild delphiniums that grew in the mountain meadows. She went at once and put her arms around the little Weakling's neck and laid her cheek next to the soft white muzzle, and then, taking hold of the end of her halter, marched off with the Weakling following on docilely behind, her bell giving off a musical clang with every other step she took.

Ludmila was pleased, for she had long wished to go into the dark glen at the foot of the Bettlerjoch a short distance away to look for elves.

She was afraid to go alone, for there might be other things there as well, such as witches, or little hairy wild men with peaked hats and long noses and ears, who hid behind rocks with only the tips of their ears and the points of their hats showing, or even perhaps a small dragon.

But with the little cow as her companion, her bronze bell tonkling loudly to frighten away any evil spirits, and with her warm and comforting presence there and the halter to cling to, Ludmila felt no fear at all, and soon child and beast were lost to sight as they left the little community at Malbun and took the path towards Gritsch and the deep wild glen at the bottom of the Bettlerjoch.

The sturdy brown legs took the child over a winding Alpine track that soon plunged into a dark pine forest. Shortly they came to a spot where the path split in two and on the right descended sharply into a dark and rocky ravine where fallen trees were tumbled like jackstraws and the boulders lay strewn about as though flung by a giant hand.

This was the mysterious ravine of the Bettlerjoch. Mounting, it grew wilder and more tumultuous until it reached that mass of granite pillars and monoliths with the curiously human forms,

which legend said were the Butter Beggars, those wandering friars who came over the pass known as the Nenzinger Himmel through the Joch to the high pasturage to beg for butter for the cold winter days to come and in return bestowed their blessings on herdsmen and herds and prayed for them, and who one day were overtaken by a terrible storm and their forms frozen there for ever.

But in the descent, the terrain grew less wild; there were little patches of grass and meadow with many herbs and wild flowers that seemed to flourish nowhere else.

For a moment, Ludmila hesitated to enter this unfamiliar territory, but the Weakling's bell jangled reassuringly, and, taking the halter once more, she entered the side of the ravine by the right-hand path and descended to the glen below.

The elves were there in the form of splinters of sunlight flashing from the quartz in the granite, or filtering through the greenery, dappling the leaves of the trees, and the child pursued them deeper and deeper into the ravine until they vanished in the darkness of tumbled rock or cave, or dense pines where the sun no longer penetrated.

Soon they came to a kind of glade opening out from the lower part of the glen through a rocky path. Here the land levelled for a space, a rushing brook quietened as it meandered through this hidden meadow, ringed with trees and rich with sweet-smelling herbs and flowers, yellow blossoms with broad leaves amongst ferns, lichens and algeas, arenarias and saxifrages growing amidst dark grasses.

The little Weakling commenced to feed contentedly, shaded by a gigantic oak tree that spread its branches in huge circumference and beneath which, amidst a scattering of sweet acorns, the flowering herbs and weeds grew in thick profusion.

Comforted by the sound of the bell about the neck of the Weakling and by her eager munching, Ludmila explored the boundaries of what was obviously a magic circle on enchanted ground; watching the long blue shadows of the trout as they sunned themselves in the brook, discovering a grey badger with shining eyes working at the mouth of his hole, startling a young deer, coming upon a whole family of little hamsters feeding on acorns, and noting hundreds of tiny green-breasted finches and blue-headed tits flitting through the branches of the trees and peering out from behind the leaves.

And in this manner, with the Weakling feeding placidly, and the child, herself turned into the very kind of woodland and mountain elf she sought, playing in and about the beautiful glen and all its wild things, time passed. The shadows grew longer, the air cooler, and the sun began to dip towards the jagged rim of the mountain peaks visible through the trunks of the tall pines, and her instinct told Ludmila that it was time to return home.

But the day had been long, exciting, and strenuous, and she was both hungry and thirsty. And since she was a herdsman's

daughter, Ludmila knew both where and how to provide herself with food and went directly to the source.

She secured the Weakling's trailing halter and led her to a sapling where she made her fast. Then, seating herself at the hind quarters, she took one of the soft teats, directed it at her mouth, closed her eyes, and began to milk.

At the touch of the little hands, so different from the rough, strong, horny palms of the herdsmen, it seemed as though a shudder ran through the Weakling. For the first moment as the child tugged, first at one then at another, there was no response. But again, the shudder shook the animal and she stood there, her feet spread apart, trembling as though in the grip of a mountain chill. All her pent-up anguish seemed to find expression in the single cry, half a moo and half a moan, that came from her throat and echoed from the pillars that represented the frozen friars of the Bettlerjoch above and went sighing off into the peaks. And then her milk began to flow.

A few drops at first, then a trickle, then a stream, and soon, a warm, rich, fragrant jet shot into the mouth of Ludmila, causing her to gurgle and laugh with surprise, pleasure, and satisfaction, a sound which surely to the Weakling must have been the most beautiful she had ever heard.

The child drank until she could hold no more, and thereafter led the Weakling to the stream to let her refresh herself, and then, taking her in tow, set off along the rocky track that led from the enchanted meadow, through the glen, and up the ravine on the homeward path. And for the first time since she had matured, the Weakling, her heart filled with joy, felt the ache of plentitude in her udders.

That night, when the herdsmen, accompanying their proud, sleek cattle, returned from the high pasturage by the Sareiserjoch to the huts and stables just below the slopes of Malbun and the milkers took to their metal pails and one-legged milking-stools, the miracle of Saint Ludmila, the holy milkmaid Notburga, began.

The Weakling was already standing in her stall, emitting low moos of pleasurable pain, when from force of habit the milker arrived at her side, set down stool and pail, seized the nearest teat, and squeezed perfunctorily, for he was weary from serving the heavy yielders and grateful that the day was drawing to a close.

But the first sound of the powerful stream of milk landing with a clang at the bottom of the pail awoke him and caused him to cry out in amazement, as by the light of the lanthorn that hung from the roof of the milking-shed, he saw the udders bearing such a burden.

When the pail was half full, his cry rose over the stamping of the hoofs in the shed, the switching of tails, and the rush of the milk—"Hola, Alois! Hola there, send for Alois. The chief herdsman is to come here at once to see what has happened."

Alois came and stared likewise, for now the pail was three-quarters filled with creamy liquid topped by foaming bubbles of

fatty froth, as rich as any that ever came from the big Swiss champions in the herd.

The pail was filled to overflowing, another was placed beside her, once again the powerful jet of milk clanged against the empty sides, and the liquid, warm and pungent, began to foam as it climbed up the pail. The other milkers and herders crowded into the shed as word spread of the astonishing thing that was happening to the little Weakling, and a moment later there was a movement in the throng and the huge bulk of Father Polda bent over to pass through the door.

He glanced at the full milk pail, the second filling beneath the fingers of the milker, the colour of the fluid and the quality of the froth that topped it, and crossed himself.

"Holy Saint Ludmila, holy Notburga!" he cried. "It is a miracle!" for he wished it so.

Alois grunted as was his custom when he was about to become hard-headed and did not wish to admit something, especially to the priest. "Some of these sickly ones come into milk late sometimes. We will see. The milk may be sour, or deficient."

At last the udders were emptied, the second pail was nearly filled and taken away to be tested, darkness fell, supper was eaten, and the men gathered about the fire, and once again the mountain Ave rang out: "O-ho! O-ho! A-ve! Ave Maria!" when the herdsman whose duty it was to watch by night by the stables came running into the circle, pale and out of breath.

"Alois! Father Polda! The one with the white muzzle, the little Weakling that was milked last tonight! I heard her complaining and went with the lanthorn to look. Her udders are filled again. She must be milked at once. Come and see if you do not believe me."

It was true. Scarce three hours had passed, but the milk sacs were again heavy with their burden. A milker was hastily summoned, and again the rich yellowish liquid thundered into the pail; once more a second had to be fetched to hold the yield.

Father Polda crossed himself again and cried, "Holy Saint Ludmila, a miracle, a miracle indeed. Well, Alois, what have you to say now?"

But the chief herdsman did not reply. He only stared bewildered at this amazing thing, though it was noted that he crossed himself likewise.

In the meantime, a layer of heavy yellowish cream, six inches deep and so thick that a spoon would have stood up in it without falling over, had gathered at the top of the first two pails that the little Weakling had filled earlier. Here was butter-fat and a wealth of it such as had not been seen produced on the high pasturage within living memory.

All through the night and the next day and the next after that, it went on. Replenishing herself with no more, it seemed, than copious draughts from buckets of water, the Weakling continued to give of her so-long-withheld riches every three or four hours,

wearing out relays of milkmen whose arms became heavy and fingers cramped.

Word began to travel of the miracle that was taking place, and mountaineers and woodcutters, keepers of hóspices and charcoal-burners from the neighbouring peaks and valleys came over to the milking-shed in Malbun to see for themselves, and soon there was no room inside for everyone and so the gentle little creature with the white muzzle, thin flanks, and tender eyes was moved out into the open where all could see her and watch the fabulous torrents of milk.

She stood there then in a kind of daze, wrapped in the glory of bestowing and the fulfilment of that part of her yearning that had to do with udders filled with life-giving food and drink that now was hers to share.

On the third day, the head dairyman came bustling from the cheese and butter sheds in a state of excitement, shouting, " One more pail, and the little one will win best of her group. She already has heart and cross won and needs only another gallon to catch up and surpass the best of her herd. It does not seem possible."

It was Father Polda who replied, " Oh yes. With a miracle, everything is possible, when there is faith in goodness and belief in the Creator Whose will has called forth greater things even than this. She may even, who knows, be the first cow through the tunnel at Steg, bearing the bell and garland of victory— "

" That cannot be," Alois said. " Schädler's Luzerner has won the right of first cow by many tens of pounds. It will be impossible for the little one to overtake her. For the woodcutter who has just arrived over the Bettlerjoch tells me that the first snow has appeared on the Panülerkopf and the Hornspitz. Tomorrow we return to the valley."

Father Polda sighed and said nothing, for the word of the chief herdsman in all things pertaining to the herds entrusted to his care was law, and no one dared question his commands. But it being Father Polda's first personal miracle, he wished to see it taken to a climax.

At that, the Weakling barely made the final pail that was needed to give her the honour of the milking-stool. For the great and miraculous flow seemed at last to come to an end, and it was all that the milkers could do to wring the last drops from her fabulous udders. Yet achieve it she did, though the effort left her weak and spent and she was led on tottery legs to the shelter of the stall, fed and watered and allowed to rest for the great event of the descent the following day.

And thus it was that the poor little Weakling was led forth the next day, cleaned, washed, brushed, so that, thin and emaciated as she was, her dun-coloured hide glistened. Hoofs and horns were polished until they sparkled in the sunlight.

At last came the moment when she felt the milking-stood pressed

between her horns by rough but kind hands and lashed there with gaily coloured ribbons.

Streamers were fastened to the stool's leg, paper flowers and cockades attached to her headstall and about her ears; garlands of flowers hung about her neck. Small-boned and lacking the stalwart maturity of the older animals, her head graced by the decorations, with her sweetness of expression she had the air of a young girl going to her first ball. She became suddenly innocently beautiful and heart-warmingly radiant.

And now word of the event that had taken place on the high pasturage had also reached the village of Vaduz which heard the rumour of how the poor peasant Vospelt's animal that hád been last in yield of dairy products had in the final three days, by the intervention of Saint Ludmila, poured forth a miraculous stream of milk.

Outside the tunnel, the crowds gathered to wait in twice the number they ever had before. They came up from Vaduz, the capital, and Schaan and Triesen, Mäls and Balzers, Nendeln and Eschen, to climb the lofty Triesenberg on foot and take up their position of vantage at Gnalp, to see for themselves whether there was any truth in the strange marvel that had been reported from the fastnesses of the high pasturage.

Because it might, if true, be an ecclesiastical affair, the Herr Canonicus Josef from the big church in Vaduz was there with lesser members of the clergy from the vicinity, and since if it were actually so it would redound to the eternal credit of Liechtenstein, a member of the ruling family from the Schloss below arrived, incognito of course.

Spontaneously and without invitation, the brass band from Schaanwald appeared, the Männerchor from Planken and the girl singers from Mauren and Ruggell. The Bürgermeister of Vaduz came in his robes, as did the president of the council and the ministers from Switzerland and Austria.

Naturally the attraction was likewise to see which would be the lead cow this year, but behind the huge turn-out lay the excitement of perhaps witnessing a marvel of some sort. It could of course hardly be true that the poor, sickly little animal they all remembered as belonging to peasant Vospelt, and which few had deemed worth even sending up to the high pasturage, could really have won a prize, much less the decoration of the milking-stool, but if there was any truth in the rumours, they were all there and prepared to see.

In Malbun the cavalcade was ready for the descent. Cattle, horses, men, women, children, dogs, all were groomed and dressed in their best and decorated in every manner possible to mark the wonderful occasion.

An hour after sun-up the procession gathered on the meadow near the little community of huts, sheds, and barns where they had all lived together during the long summer and the doors and windows of which were now boarded up.

Father Polda stood upon a drinking-trough and blessed them, as was his custom, and sent up a prayer of gratitude to Saint Ludmila for the miracle she had created for them. Then, with cries from the herders, the cracking of whips, the barking of dogs, and the gay singing of the women and children, they started down the Malbun, along the roaring torrent to Steg.

First in the line, the silver clapper of the big copper bell about her neck booming her approach, came Schädler's great champion Luzerner, winning beast the second year in succession, milking-stool worn proudly as one who was used to such trophies borne upon her head. Then came Gruber's Friesian and Wohlmayr's Züricher champion in second and third place, followed by several others that had ranked high.

Thereafter, proudly heading the last division of the mixed herd belonging to many poor peasants, tottered the little Weakling with her gay decorations and sweet exalted expression, looking like a mixture of half cocotte, half angel. At her head marched Ludmila, cornflowers the colour of her eyes braided in her brown hair. At her side walked Father Polda.

The three came eventually to the shrine of the holy Notburga by the torrent Malbun, and here they paused and turned to her as though by mutual understanding and consent, the huge man in the black cassock, the brown, barelegged child, and the Weakling. No word was spoken. Ludmila had her arm about the neck of the animal and together they stood by the wooden rail that guarded people from falling into the stream, and looked across the silver waters to the figure in the niche, with the tender expression on her carved and painted countenance.

On the child's face was wonder. In the eyes of the Weakling was deathless love. On the lips of Father Polda was a prayer. There they remained thus for so long that Alois returned to see what was holding up the procession and thus he found them.

When her father came up, the child suddenly left the little cow and ran to him, put her arms around his neck, and began to cry, causing him to say, " Now, now, Ludmila, what is the matter? Why are you crying? "

" Because of my little cow who is so beautiful. Saint Ludmila wishes her to lead all the others."

The chief herdsman was much less hard-headed when it came to his daughter and he smiled at her and said, " She does, does she? And how would you know this? "

Ludmila stopped crying and took her father's hand and led him to the rail, looked across to Saint Ludmila, and replied, " Because she spoke to me, and *told me so.* Please, Papa, let her be the first."

Alois looked from his daughter to the Weakling, to Father Polda, standing at her side, and said harshly, " What is this nonsense? What does she mean, the Saint spoke to her? Did you hear anything? "

Father Polda smiled, and gently shook his head. " Sometimes little children can hear things that we cannot."

For a moment the big bearded herdsman stood there staring at the statue. Then he picked up the child on his arm and strode away down the path. Man and beast followed.

But at Steg, the last stopping-place before they moved down the Saminatal and entered the rock tunnel to emerge into the world beyond, Alois gave brief and sharp orders; two herdsmen came to the rear of the procession and led the little Weakling forward to the head of the line. There, while all stared in utter amazement, they took the great black-silver star and heart-studded bell with the polished black leather collar from the leading cow and hung it about the Weakling's neck. They likewise removed the crown of laurel leaves from the noble brow of the Luzerner champion and draped it about the head of the Weakling, for whom it was too big, and therefore fell slightly askew, giving her an even more coquettish air.

In her emaciated state from the great effort she had made, the weight of the big bell was almost more than she could carry. Then the halter lead was put into the hands of Ludmila. The Weakling staggered forward and the two, now at the head of the procession, led the way down the road into the tunnel.

It was wrong and arbitrary, what Alois did, for Schädler's big Luzerner had fairly won the right to lead them all home a second year, and one voice from the crowd protested, "Hola there, Mr. Chief Herdsman, what is going on? Everyone knows that Schädler's animal is the winner."

But with a terrible frown, Alois cried, "Quiet! Saint Ludmila herself has commanded that the Weakling lead us home!" And thereafter none dared dispute his decision.

Soon the dense crowd lining both sides of the road on the other side of the tunnel heard the irregular booming of the big cowbell around the neck of the approaching leader. It would ring, then stop, then ring faintly, again louder as it approached, more faintly again, and once it jangled harshly as though the bearer had stumbled.

Murmurs and shivers of excitement ran through the crowd. Louder and louder sounded the great bell and steadier now. The moment was at hand.

Out of the mouth of the tunnel stepped a brown elf with corn-flowers the colour of her eyes braided through her brown hair, leading a small thin cow with a white muzzle, belled, crowned, and garlanded. For a moment they stood blinking in the sunlight. Then a great shout went up from the throng, a cheer and a cry and a greeting and a prayer all in one. Men waved their hats and shouted.

It was true. The miracle had taken place, for there was the evidence before their very eyes. Not only had the poor despised Weakling won the right to wear her milking-stool, but the champion's laurels and winner's position, the prize of best cow of the year had come to her. Only a Saint could have made this possible.

Then the brass band struck up the national anthem of Liechten-

stein, the Männerchor burst into song as did the Sängerbund of girls from Mauren and Ruggell, and the women's choir from Triesenberg.

His Highness, the member of the Royal family, dropped his incognito and stepped forward to pin a glittering medal, the Royal Double Eagle, First Class, to the Weakling's collar and pick up the child Ludmila in his arms and kiss her. Herr Canonicus Josef suddenly knelt in the road, followed by the other members of the clergy, and struck up an *Alleluia*, and the next moment men, women, and children in the huge throng of welcomers likewise went to their knees, singing and giving thanks.

And so, her greatest desire and dream of glory come to realization, the little Weakling, burdened with the earthly prizes awarded to her by heavenly dispensation, looked out upon this strange scene, the towering mountains opposite, the blue thread of the Rhine in the valley far below, the people in their Sunday best kneeling in the road, the black-robed priests, the stately figure of His Highness, and her eyes were gentle and swimming, filled with love and happiness, that all this that she had so much desired had in the end happened to her, and that before her final moment she had been privileged to give.

With that sure instinct of animals, she knew she was looking for the last time upon the sunshine and the kindly people whom it had been her duty to feed. And she was content.

The big bell boomed out. The sun glittered from the golden medal at her collar. Child and animal started forward again down the mountain followed by the gay and colourful procession of the annual return from the high pasturage.

There is not much more to the story. The little Weakling passed away in the valley before sundown that evening. Yet strangely it did not put a damper on the happiness of the people at having been singled out for the execution of a miracle in their midst. They and the Canonicus saw it quite simply as the logical extension of the miracle whereby, having performed it and demonstrated her love and power via the Weakling, Saint Ludmila, the holy Notburga, had taken the little animal to her as her reward, and she would henceforth graze peacefully and happily in the heavenly pastures close to the side of her loving friend and patron. And it is for this reason that the skull and horns of the Weakling were bestowed on the shrine of the Saint.

The butter and cheese made from the miraculous milk of the Weakling brought their weight in gold and never again would the poor peasant Vospelt or his family want for anything.

Only one thing more remains to be told.

A week later, chief herdsman Alois suddenly appeared at Steg in the Samina valley with the child Ludmila at his side and sought out Father Polda in the tiny chapel.

" Come," he said to the priest. " Come with us."

They walked, all three in silence up the path again, past the

shrine in the rocks to which Alois did not so much as vouchsafe a glance now, until they came to the deserted huts and barns on the Malbun slope. Here it was that the little Ludmila at her father's behest took over the leadership, and with the sure orientation of the mountain child, led them up the path to the Bettlerjoch.

As she had once before, she branched off from the main dark and fearsome ravine downwards towards the glen of the elves, and thence through the rock path to the magic circle in the enchanted meadow, peaceful in the morning sun with only the sound of birds in the great oak, the rustling of small animals in the underbrush, and the gentle murmur of the stream resting before it resumed its plunge below.

Alois now roved about this meadow, his eyes on the ground; he went to the brook, came back, knelt near the oak tree and examined the ground, arose and went to the opposite side and did the same. And as he searched, his dark, bearded face lit up with satisfaction and at last he came over and faced Father Polda.

" Well," asked the priest, " why have you brought me here? What is it you have discovered? "

" This," said Alois. " Look there. Do you recognize that little weed with the yellow flower and the broad leaf? "

Father Polda gazed down at the plant that seemed to be growing in unusual profusion all about them. " It is the alchemilla," he replied, " the Mutterkraut."

" Yes," said the herdsman. " Have you ever seen so much at one time? "

The priest shook his head. " No, it is most unusual."

" Ah! Then come here and look. Here under the oak tree, it grows almost solid. But see where it has been cropped, and the hoof-marks of an animal. Round and about this tree it has been eaten away . . . "

" Well? " said the priest.

Alois threw him a look of triumph. " It was here that Ludmila came that day with the little Weakling when I refused to take her along to the high pasture. Those are her hoofmarks. The little one in a few hours found and consumed more Mutterkraut than most Alpine cattle would in a lifetime. The whole day she grazed upon the alchemilla. In the evening, her milk glands violently stimulated, she started to give milk." He smiled in triumph again and looked the priest in the eye. " There is your miracle of Saint Ludmila for you. It is explained as I always knew it must be."

The priest remained silent and his eyes were bent to the ground where the hoof-prints of the little Weakling were still plainly to be seen as well as the close-to-the-ground cropped ends of many of the alchemilla plants which somehow had flourished in this secluded place.

" Well," asked the chief herdsman, " what have you to say? "

The priest looked up, but his brow was unclouded and his eyes untroubled and clear. " Yes," he said finally. " You are right. The miracle is indeed explained for all those for whom

miracles must always be explained lest they be forced to confess that they are not as important as they believe themselves to be."

Alois said, " You admit, then, that now we know why all of a sudden the Weakling gave so much milk and of such high content that in the end it was like giving her heart's blood and strength and it killed her? "

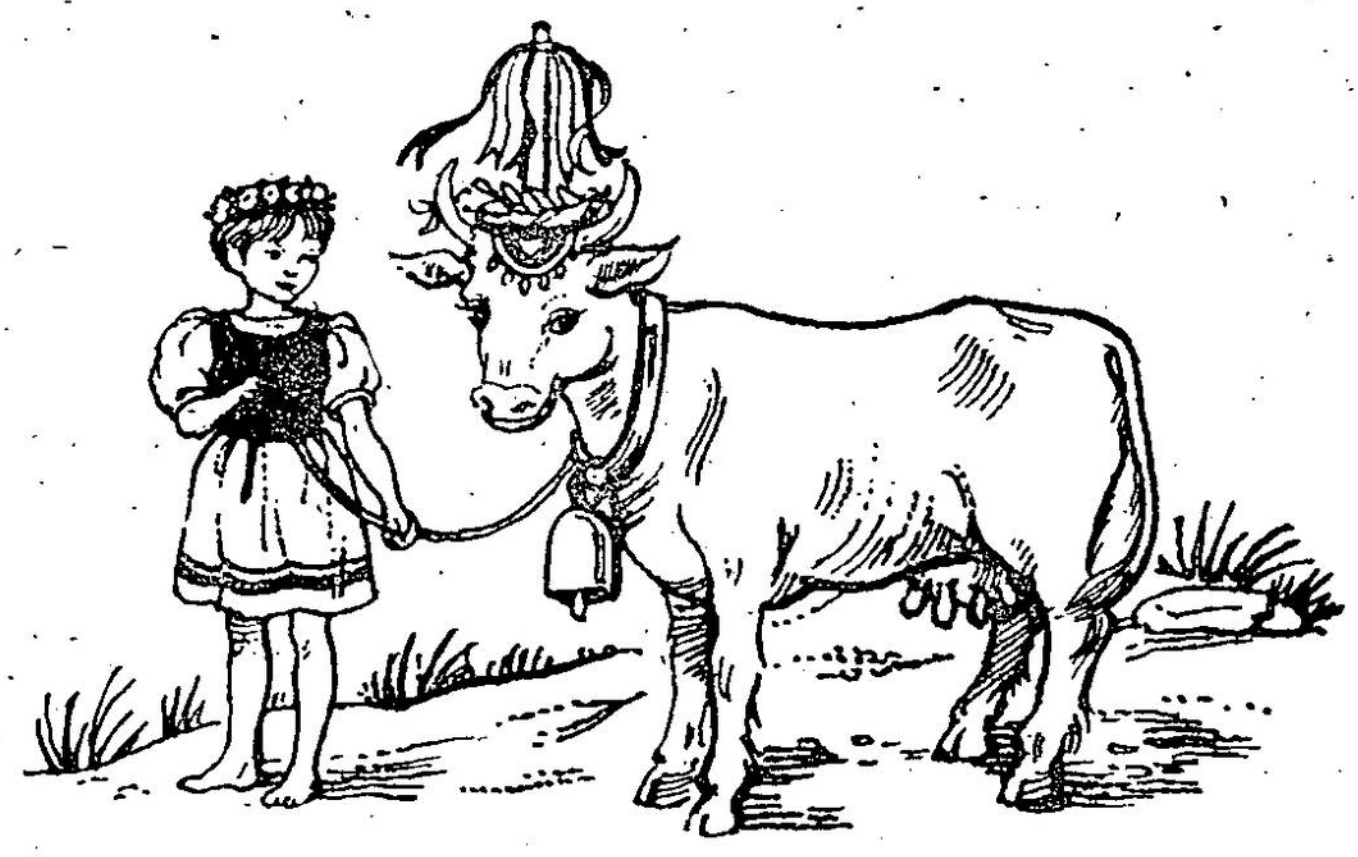
A little smile now played about the lips of the big priest. " That is correct," he said. " Now we know why the little one suddenly gave so much milk. Ah yes, now we know everything."

" Eh? " said Alois suspiciously, struck by something in the tone of the priest. " What do you mean by everything? "

" Oh," replied Father Polda, still smiling, " all the other miracles which you will explain to me—what made you say that day the little Weakling was praying at the shrine of Saint Ludmila, what was it that led you to decide against taking the animal to the high pasturage that day, how you came to entrust her to little Ludmila's care—also, of course, how the child came to wander here to this deserted glen where no ordinary child would venture alone, and how together they discovered this marvellous patch of Mutterkraut —and finally the greatest wonder of all, what made you decide in one moment to listen to your child, go against the records, and at the last minute name the Weakling champion cow and leader of the descent into the valley, thus setting the final stamp and seal on the miracle in which you do not believe."

He paused and offered his hand to the child who took it confidingly. " Come," he said, " let us go from here." He turned to Alois, still smiling gently. " But there will be time for those explanations later . . . "

He walked slowly hand in hand with Ludmila back the way they had come through the rocky defile. Behind them Alois walked silently, his head bent towards the ground as one in deep thought.



Follow My Fancy

Supposing one should follow him into the turkish bath . . .

by JOAN AIKEN

"URANIUM," said the captain. "Uranium 235." The words glittered on his tongue like sparks from a gold-stopped tooth.

There was no crew. The only answer came from the wind, which sang in the rigging of his crazy old ship like the music of Orpheus. Jake Brandywine looked about him thoughtfully. The decks were clear. The sails were stowed, since there would be no need for them. In so far as was possible, old *Argo* was trim and ready for the voyage.

Provisions? He had laid in a thousand breakfast biscuits, a thousand tins of lunch meat, a thousand teacakes, a thousand bottles of dinner wine; food for over three years. And if, despite this store, hunger gnawed at him like an old rat, he could munch away at his supply of charcoal, brought for sketching seascapes.

Nevertheless, the captain had a hunted, haunted look in his eye; he glanced continually about him, started at sounds, and grabbed convulsively at the shrouds when sea swallows swooped past. His hand, holding the little soapstone box of uranium, shook uncontrollably, white at the knuckles, and sweat darted glistening on his forehead. He had the air of a man pursued by the furies, escaping only just in time.

To learn the reason for this state of affairs we must go back some months, and shift our scene to the luxuriously appointed consulting-room of a Harley Street psychosomatic specialist . . .

Dr. Killgruel looked at his patient appraisingly, noted the fine-drawn lines round eyes and mouth, the restless movements, the unsteady hands.

"You are Jake Brandywine the artist?" he inquired.

The patient nodded.

"I admire your work," said the doctor. "I am the possessor of an early Brandywine myself." He flicked a speck from his snowy sleeve. "Now, what is your trouble precisely?"

Jake looked somewhat shamefaced.

"You need not be embarrassed," said the doctor. "I can see that you are suffering from nervous exhaustion, a state that leads people into all sorts of odd activities, of no importance in themselves. One of my patients, for instance, suffers from a compulsion to get up in the night and eat the cheese out of the mouse-traps in the pantry. His fingers are terribly badly bruised and he has chronic indigestion. But I interrupt."

He placed his fingertips together and looked attentively at Jake.

"My trouble is not like that exactly," Jake said. "It undoubtedly began with exhaustion. There is, as perhaps you know, an enormous demand for my work at present, not only by private buyers, but also for tube stations, corner-houses, town halls, piers, and public lavatories. About a month ago I had been rushing to finish a series of murals for restaurant cars, working nineteen and twenty hours a day, and was suffering from acute physical fatigue.

"I live some distance from the centre of London, on the 93 bus route, and just at this time the service had been cut; I used to work all night and go home in the middle of the day, and in my exhausted state it seemed to me that I spent my entire life either working or waiting for buses that failed to appear.

"Well, one day, to pass the time, I started willing the bus to come; I imagined it cruising past Woolworth's, along to the Town Hall, round the corner, over the railway bridge, and down to the bus stop. When I stopped concentrating and looked up, there was a 93, sure enough. Of course I was amused, and thought it nothing but a coincidence, but the next day the same thing happened, and every day after that; it became a sort of game that I played to distract myself."

The doctor nodded.

"That was all right. I didn't really take it seriously, you understand. But one evening when I was literally staggering with fatigue, I was waiting in Oxford Street for a bus to take me to Hyde Park Corner, and unconsciously, without intending to, I started playing my game. A flash of red caught my eye, I looked up, and there was a 93—a bus which, as you know, has no right to be in Oxford Street at all."

He stopped and gazed hollow-eyed at the doctor, who smiled sympathetically. "It must have been a dreadful moment," he agreed. "What did you do?"

"I took a taxi."

"Very sensible." The doctor's tone was approving. "Take as many as you can while the delusion lasts."

"But, doctor, it was no delusion. It was a real bus. And

since then it has happened repeatedly. I can't stop thinking about 93 buses, and they keep turning up everywhere. What terrifies me is the thought that sooner or later I shall fetch one down into the Underground or a turkish bath or—or a canoe on the Serpentine—"

"Come, come," said Dr. Killgruel. "These are morbid fears. We can deal with them at once, very easily. Then I'll give you a tonic to set you right. You know quite well that your subconscious won't let you will a bus to appear in an unsuitable place any more than, for example, a hypnotic subject will let himself be ordered to do something that violates his conscience. He simply refuses. Now, just to convince you and make your mind easy on this point, I order you to will a 93 bus into this room."

"No, no!" exclaimed Brandywine, white with terror. "For heaven's sake, doctor, don't make me do that!"

Dr. Killgruel was implacable. "You must put yourself in my hands or I can do nothing for you. Will the bus to appear—I command you."

Jake gave him a desperate look and then with a visible effort summoned his forces as if he were drawing a deep breath.

There was a rending sound, a frantic tooting, a screech of brakes, and with a last burst of resolution Jake dragged the doctor to one side as a 93 bus bore triumphantly down upon them.

Dr. Killgruel was in hospital for two months. Jake hardly liked to go and see him, since he himself had escaped with bruises and concussion, though his state of mind was such that the number of 93 buses on London Transport's roster was more than trebled.

But when the doctor came out he summoned Jake for another consultation. "Your case interests me," he said. "I've been thinking a lot about it, and I can see that until you're cured, which I'm convinced is only a matter of time, we must effect a transference."

"A transference?"

"Your remarkably powerful will must be trained on some object more suitable than a 93 bus. Can you think of anything else occupying a large part of your attention? There are generally several things of the sort in one's mind, such as broken shirt buttons or lost letters."

"My life was so well organized until this business began," said Jake mournfully.

"Are you married?" asked Dr. Killgruel.

Jake shook his head. "I have a char," he said with brevity.

"Is there no female person present in your thoughts?"

At this Jake paused, and a shadow came over his face. Then he said slowly, "I suppose you might say that of Miss M."

Pressed to explain himself, he gave an account of Miss M.

He rented his studio from the art department of a fashion magazine called *Fancy*, which had more space than it required in its offices, and where he felt comfortably anonymous among the elegancies of typists and the detached Plymouth Brotherhood of typographers.

The arrangement had worked admirably for a year, but recently there had been some internal rearrangements among the personnel of *Fancy*, and he discovered that the editress, Miss Milk, had been installed in the room next to his.

The first intimation he had was a series of melancholy howls which began at half past ten each morning and continued throughout the day. These were explained when he found himself being scrutinized malevolently through the window by a pair of sapphire eyes; Miss M.'s siamese was outside on the sill. He opened the window, but was so repelled by the neurotic clamour raised by the creature that he shot it out into the passage.

This provoked the first of a series of notes:

Dear Mr. Brandywine,

If you let Judas into your room, please see that he is returned to Room 515; he must not be allowed to wander about the building, as he gets lost.

It was written on *Fancy* notepaper, thick as steel plate, in an arrogant black hand, and signed with the initials *A.M.*

Brandywine resolved that never again should Judas set foot in his room, but it was impossible to adhere to this resolution as spring turned to sweltering summer and he was obliged to leave the windows open. Judas would come in, patter superciliously round the room, making Jake nervous by long silences and sudden querulous howls; then he would disappear through the window to his owner's room, incurring a perfect torrent of notes from Miss M.

Could Mr. Brandywine keep his room cleaner; Judas had to be shampooed to get the charcoal dust out of his fur; could Mr. Brandywine put away his paints when not in use, as Judas had returned with chrome yellow on his paws and flake white on his tail; would Mr. Brandywine please refrain from feeding Judas (this when he had been driven to the vain resort of sardine sandwiches for pacificatory purposes) as one meal a day was sufficient for any siamese.

Each note was signed *A.M.* and the initials began to have a

malignant significance in Jake's mind. He pictured Miss Milk as a sort of embodied capital, a black gallows of a woman with square upper-case shoulders and feet like serifs.

"Splendid!" said the doctor at the end of this recital. "She will form the nexus of an excellent fixation. You must think about her all you can, and arrange to meet her. Reality is always more useful than imagination. And move up to town, out of range of the 93 buses. Come back and see me in a fortnight."

Next morning Brandywine was in his studio meditating pretexts for meeting Miss M. when the telephone rang and a frightened voice twittered into his ear that Miss Milk would be pleased if he would step round and have coffee with her at eleven-three. His state of mind hovered between alarm and elation at this rapid development; the transference seemed to be taking place with disconcerting speed.

When he entered Miss M.'s room he found her sitting in an attitude that would have been inelegant in most women; she was tipped back in her chair, crossed ankles resting on the corner of her desk. But all Brandywine could think was that she resembled a swallow, with the bird's slender, elongated silhouette. She was wearing a close, dark smoke-blue dress, which heightened the impression; wings of black hair, faintly silvered, were brushed back above haughty blue eyes and an angular profile.

She nodded coldly at Brandywine, indicating a chair, and a terrified little secretary scurried forward with a cup of coffee.

Jake felt that unless he asserted himself now he was lost. "I wonder if you could let me have a drop of cognac," he said hoarsely. "I find I can't get through the day unless I have one at this time."

When he returned to his studio an hour later his mind was in a ferment. Miss M. had commissioned a series of illustrations for *Fancy* at less than a third of his usual price, and she had also said that they must have lunch on Tuesday, a drink on Wednesday, and dinner on Thursday.

"What was the other thing I had to do?" he wondered, leaning out of his window and distractedly tearing up little bits of paper. The sight across the road of windows ornamented with squirls of whitewash reminded him: he was supposed to find a flat in town. If that was an empty one he might as well inquire about it.

His hopes were justified, and he moved in without delay, the only proviso from the landlord being that he must not upset the tenant on the top flat, who did not care for dogs, modern music, or late parties.

He arrived home late the following evening to find a note stuck in his letter-box, and stood reading it by the landing light. It said: *Tenant No. 17, Please do not leave fish-heads on the fire-escape. A.M.*

He was still digesting this when a perfumed, dark blue presence rustled up the stairs to him, closely followed by a siamese.

A fortnight later Brandywine staggered into Dr. Killgruel's room more dead than alive.

"Well," said the doctor with interest, "how are things going? Are you getting the 93's reduced?"

"Ninety-threes—" Jake brushed them aside. "It's not them, doctor, it's Atalanta. She's killing me."

"*Who?*"

"Atalanta—Miss Milk. I can't sleep, I can't work, I can't think—she's always turning up. At seven in the morning she wants to borrow my spatula, at midnight she drops in saying she's run out of olive oil. Look at me—I've lost two stone already."

"Is she beautiful?" inquired Killgruel professionally.

"Beautiful?" groaned Jake furiously. "My god, doctor, she's a fiend. You should hear her rating that unfortunate child who works for her, or blowing up the char, or chiselling some wretched author down to ~~sub~~sistence rates. I shall go crazy. I can't stop thinking about her."

"I'd like to see her."

Jake threw him a look of despair, the door opened, and Miss M. sailed in.

"It's good of you to spare me a moment," she said to Killgruel. "It isn't for myself—my health is always excellent, naturally—but Judas has been feeling the heat and seems to be rather nervy."

Poor Jake burst into tears and ran out of the room.

When Killgruel next saw him, Jake was surprisingly calm and composed. "I've made my own plans," he said. "I must get away from everything."

"An excellent plan," agreed the doctor. "Where are you going?"

"I've applied for the job of captain on the *Argo*."

"The *Argo*!" said Killgruel, startled.

Recently the papers had been full of the battered old schooner which was going to be the first craft powered solely by uranium. A little piece no bigger than a hazel-nut, inserted in a special chamber under the stern, would, it was suggested, propel the

aged ship for ever, like the tiny Japanese boats that dart about saucers of warm water, impelled by little bits of camphor.

The only question unsolved was whether *Argo*, once launched, could be made to stop. No anchor cable would hold her; it was possible that a negative reaction might be started to neutralize the force under her keel, but this must be a matter of speculation until the experiment was carried out. There was a chance, therefore, that the man who hazarded himself on her worm-eaten decks was due to be a second Flying Dutchman, borne in a random circle round the earth's circumference for ever.

Jake seemed to relish the prospect.

" Frankly, I've had enough of civilization," he said. " A life in which one can be dogged by female fashion editors and 93 buses is no life for me."

" But," Dr. Killgruel objected, " what's to stop them from following you on board? "

" Navigation," Jake answered. " My mind will be too occupied for the first year. I've never been good at mathematics, and I shan't have any attention to spare."

" It will come easier after a while."

" By that time I shall have recovered, or if not," said Jake decisively, " I shall throw myself overboard."

Dr. Killgruel could not entirely approve this course but he saw that Brandywine's mind was made up.

The Press of the world waited in excitement for the launching of *Argo*, but it waited at a distance; Jake had been particular that he should be left alone on the lonely Essex beach that was the taking-off point. Also, and this was perhaps a more cogent reason, there was the possibility of a nuclear explosion when the uranium was first subjected to the activating current.

Here was Jake, then, pacing about the deck, which sparkled with February frost, and glancing from time to time along the pale deserted line of sand, fringed with a white tide-mark. Gulls keened, the wind sang; sharp gusts of sand—" travellers " —blew from time to time past *Argo*'s keel in an offshore wind, as she snuggled deeper and deeper into her bed of sand and ooze.

The shipping lanes had been cleared, helicopters hovered at a respectful distance, and telegrams from statesmen and heads of governments were pinned to the mast; also photographs, sent by enthusiastic schoolgirls.

At length Jake's anxious vigil was at an end; glancing for a last time at his watch, he climbed awkwardly down the swinging rope-ladder over the stern, with care deposited the soapstone box and its precious contents in the prepared chamber, and snapped home the protective door. Then he swung himself back on deck,

checked the time again, drew a deep breath, and pulled the switch of a tiny battery lying in the foc'sle.

There was a convulsive jerk and shudder, as *Argo* tore herself loose from the mud, and then, with an unbelievably smooth and lightning-swift motion, she darted off, cutting through the choppy seas like a razor.

" We've done it! " Jake cried, his face brilliant with happiness. " I'm free! " And he patted the old ship on her carved wooden quarter-deck railings before swinging himself aft to unlash the rudder and turn her on the agreed course down-Channel.

She was followed in her flight by numerous aircraft. No ship could keep her in view, though many had a brief glimpse of her, masts set back like a scalded cat, scudding through the mist on her way to the South Atlantic.

Radio stations kept track of her progress as she fled by the Argentine coast and rounded Cape Horn; storm or shine meant nothing to her, she was through all weather before it could affect her.

The sole message transmitted by her captain from time to time was, " All well."

In two days he had completed his first circuit of the world, in seven the urgently repeated question, " Can you stop? " was answered by a laconic " No," and *Argo* pursued her crazy course into infinity.

Scientists, distressed at the thought of Jake skating over the world's aqueous surface for the rest of his life, like a grain of sand on an eyeball, worked night and day at the problem of how to put a brake on *Argo*'s career. But no signs of distress came from Jake.

On a summer day some months later, Dr. Killgruel was visited by Miss M. They had become friends since the departure of Brandywine, and the visit was nothing unusual, but she was looking pale, he thought, and rather sad; she said she was run down and needed a tonic.

" You hear nothing from Mr. Brandywine, I suppose? " she asked, and he noticed a wistful tone to her voice. " You know, it's odd, but I miss him terribly. I suppose he doesn't even think of me."

For the first time since he had met her she looked human, Killgruel reflected; human and vulnerable. There were tears in her eyes, even.

" I'm tired," she said miserably. " I can't work up any enthusiasm for *Fancy* nowadays. If only I thought he sometimes remembered me it would be a little better."

"Perhaps he will later on," said the doctor gently. "He's very occupied just now, you know. You must give him time—" He paused, his words hanging in mid air. For the chair in which Miss M. had been sitting was empty, and nothing of her remained in the room save a fragrance of *Nuit de Mai*.

Eighteen months after *Argo*'s launching, Jake signalled that he was running short of food. The scientists were surprised that their calculations on the duration of his provisions should have been so wide of the mark.

"Give reasons for extra-consumption," they radioed, and Jake replied, "Stowaways."

Dr. Killgruel managed to secure a place on the aircraft that was to parachute fresh supplies; the area chosen was the South Pacific.

Gradually they overhauled *Argo*; she appeared first as a speck on the shining blue, then as a cobweb or skeleton leaf, and finally as her rakish self, clawing through the water with a bone in her teeth. Slowly the plane gained on her, and at last held steady over her chalk-white decks while the little dandelion puffs fluttered down with their life-saving cargoes of soya, sago, celery, and stout.

Looking through powerful glasses, Dr. Killgruel saw Brandywine and his stowaways. Dressed in nothing but a pair of old jeans, with an arm round Miss M., serene in a sarong, Jake sprawled in a hammock, brown as a nut and blissfully happy. Near at hand, like a faithful dinosaur, stood an attendant 93 bus.

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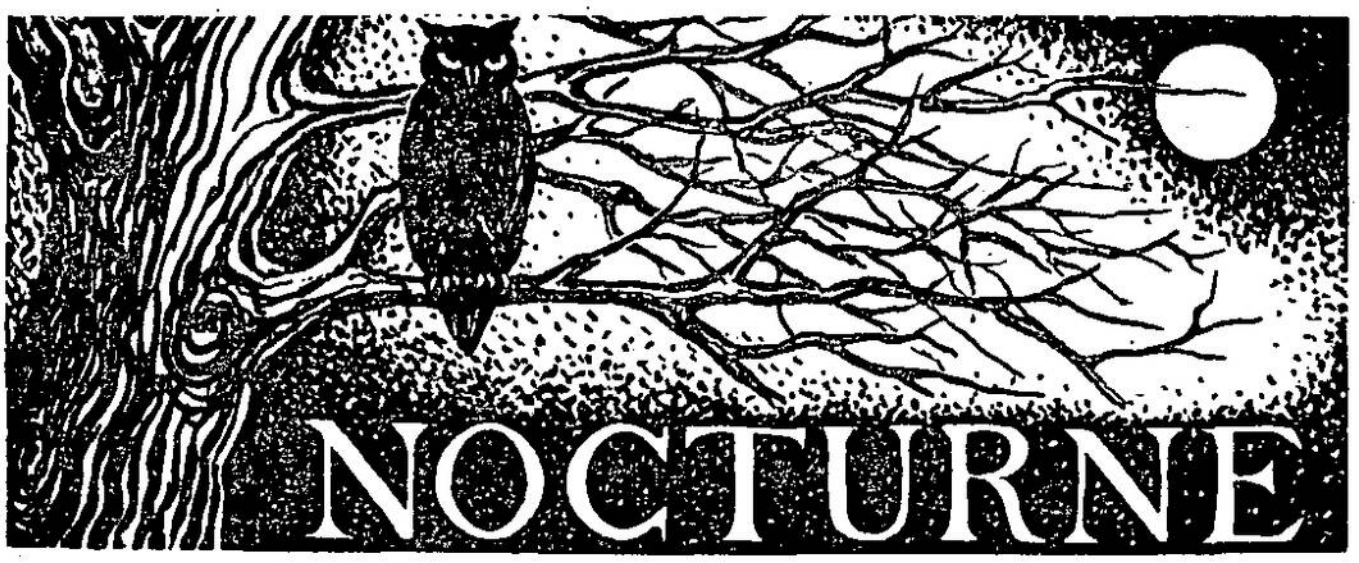

For at night the heart comes out,
like a cat on the tiles

DYLAN THOMAS

In love they wore themselves in a green embrace.
A silken rain fell through the spring upon them.
In the park she fed the swans and he
whittled nervously with his strange hands.
And white was mixed with all their colours
as if they drew it from the flowering trees.

At night his two-finger whistle brought her down
the waterfall stairs to his shy smile
which, like an eddy, turned her round and round
lazily and slowly so her will
was nowhere—as in dreams things are and aren't.

Walking along the avenues in the dark
street lamps sang like sopranos in their heads
with a violence they never understood
and all their movements when they were together
had no conclusion . . .

P. K. PAGE, *Adolescence*

Light of Love

In the cool of the evening Balan presented Lotus Blossom to the Prince. His knees shook but he managed to keep control of his voice as he told the Prince of his final success in finding his model. He waved his hand towards Lotus Blossom, who stood beside him swathed from head to foot in innumerable gauzes.

" Unveil," the Prince commanded.

" Highness," said Balan, " the lady requests that she be seen by the same light as you saw my statue; namely, she asks for lamps and a darkened room."

"Aesthetically," said the Prince, "there is much to be said for such a course. Come, my dear," he said, endeavouring to pierce with his eager eye the wrappings about her, "let us go to an inner apartment."

Curving rhythmically, Lotus Blossom followed the Prince into a small but restfully appointed room in which the Prince had his day bed. Attendants drew the curtains; servants brought lamps. When they were lit, the Prince clapped his hands and everyone save Lotus Blossom and the Prince withdrew.

"Come, my dear," said the Prince, and drew her down on to the bed . . . Lotus Blossom leaned towards him, kissed him, lowered her eyelids and lengthily unveiled.

As Balan knew, there were innumerable differences between her torso and that of his statue. The Prince passed them over, noting only one. He observed, with rapturous delight, that Lotus Blossom was by no means made of stone.

AUBREY MENEN, *Rama Retold*

Morning Flight

If there was a broken whispering by night
It was an image of the coward heart,
But the white dawn assures them how to part—
Stoics are born on the cold glitter of light,
And with the morning star lovers take flight . . .

JOHN CROWE RANSOM, *Parting at Dawn*

Enslaved

It was a soft, humid, rainy day, one of those erotic days which Daudet has just painted. Dusk was beginning to fall. I was strolling in the garden. Suddenly I see the girl coming straight toward me and she takes me (I was her master and she—she was just a slave) by the hair on my nape, saying: "Come!" What followed was a sensation not unlike the sensations which we have all experienced. But this gentle seizing of my hair with this single word sometimes comes back to me, and the bare thought of it makes me happy.

IVAN TURGENEV

Thru the Nicht

O luely, luely, cam she in
And luely she lay doun:
I kent her be her caller lips
And her breists sae sma' and roun'.

A' thru the nicht we spak nae word
Nor sinder'd bane frae bane:
A' thru the nicht I heard her hert
Gang soundin' wi' my ain . . .

Sae luely, luely, cam she in
Sae luely was she gaen;
And wi' her a' my simmer days
Like they had never been.

WILLIAM SOUTAR, *The Tryst*

O Candle-Light!

How many lips haue beene worne out with kissing at the street doore, or in ye entry (in a winking blind euening?) how many odde matches and vneuen mariages haue been made there betweene young Prentises and there maisters daughters, whilest thou (O Candle-light) hast stood watching at the staires heade, that none could come stealing downe by thee, but they must bee seene?

THOMAS DEKKER,
The Seuen deadly Sinnes of London, 1606

Escapade

At twelve of the night,
When the moon shines bright
With my lover I shall be a gadder;
I'll steal from the house
To the arms of my spouse,
Tho' my father grow madder and madder.
No matter for keys, no matter for locks,
For love, subtle love, all obstacles mocks.
Then hey! for the bundle, and the band-box,
But not forgetting the ladder.

CHARLES JOHNSON, *The Village Opera*

QUIGLEY 873

Thirsty work spinnin' these legends

by FRANK SULLIVAN

PERHAPS no class of scientist is more apt to encounter the unexpected in the course of his work than the student of folk-lore.

My wife and I appreciated this last summer when we discovered the refreshingly unique Lovers' Leap at Wassamattawichez Notch, New Hampshire, which for research purposes we have catalogued as Quigley 873.

My wife, Dr. Johanna Bracegirdle Quigley, and myself (Professor W. Hungerford Quigley) may possibly be recognized as co-authors of *The Role of the Lovers' Leap in American Folklore*, the rather monumental study that, we flatter ourselves, has effected a sweeping change in thought on the subject since its publication, a decade ago. We narrowed our field of research to the Lovers' Leap because it seemed to us not only a fascinating but a neglected aspect of folk-lore, and we have never regretted our decision.

Dr. Johanna, a mite more thorough as a scientist than am I, has several times actually made the jump from a Lovers' Leap, just to get the feel of the thing, but on each occasion she used a parachute; I have been adamant on that point.

I might say a word or two here about Lovers' Leaps, for the benefit of readers unfamiliar with the colourful tradition. In North America, which is rich in precipices of all heights, the Lovers' Leap has reached its fullest flower, and in American folklore it is almost always a beautiful Indian maiden and a handsome young brave who, thwarted in their love by parental or tribal opposition, solved their problem tragically by leaping from a ledge at the top of the precipice to the rocks below. The scene later becomes known in legend as a Lovers' Leap.

The investigations of Dr. Johanna and myself, up to our discovery of Quigley 873, had revealed eight hundred and seventy-two authentic Lovers' Leaps in the United States and Canada, and we thought we had exhausted the field. The jumps ranged from fifty to three thousand feet, and the leaping lovers represented every tribe in the country except the Seminoles of Florida.

Florida, being very flat, affords no facilities for lovers desirous of leaping, and how the star-crossed Seminoles solve their difficulties is a nice problem that Dr. Johanna and I hope one day to probe.

It was during a motor trip in the White Mountains that we discovered Quigley 873. We were bowling along a road near Lake Wassamattawichez on an idyllic June afternoon when, rounding a bend, we saw before us, on the opposite side of the valley, a crag that we both realized instantly might be a Lovers' Leap, and one of the most perfect we had ever encountered—sheer drop, magnificent view, parking-space. It had everything!

" It *must* be a Lovers' Leap, but I don't seem to recognize it," I said to Dr. Johanna. Was it possible that we had stumbled on a new Leap? We hardly dared hope.

Well, the thing was to find out, and to do this it was necessary, of course, to locate the oldest inhabitant of North Wassamattawichez, the village nestling in the valley below. My wife and I once differed, though not seriously, on the best method of verifying oldest inhabitants. If a birth certificate was not available, she favoured a thorough physical examination by a competent physician, but oldest inhabitants, she found, often displayed a nettling resistance to such a test, and she finally gave up her method and adopted mine, which I do think works as well in the long run.

My system is simply this: If a native sufficiently advanced in years uses " mebbe " for " maybe," " allus " for " always," and " sezee " for " says he," and if he recalls that his father carried him to the railroad station to watch Lincoln's funeral train pass by, in 1865, then I ask him his age, deduct fifteen years from his answer, and accept him as a bona-fide oldest inhabitant.

Dr. Johanna and I soon found our man, a venerable patriarch named Jonas Atkinson, one-hundred-and-four-minus-fifteen years old, and we engaged him in conversation over a mug of foaming ale at the quaint tavern in the village.

By way of breaking the conversational ice, I asked him the traditional question demanded by protocol: " To what do you attribute your great age, Mr. Atkinson? "

" I allus sweat good," he replied, and, gazing into his already empty mug, added slyly, " an' I allus enjoy my ale."

I commanded the landlord to fetch more ale. Dr. Johanna then took up the ball. " My husband and I were attracted by that odd-looking cliff yonder side of the valley," she said with assumed nonchalance. " Has it by any chance got a name? "

" Yep," said Mr. Atkinson. " It's called Lovers' Leap."

The astronomer who has found a new comet or the botanist

who has uncovered a hitherto-unknown trillium will recognize the excitement that filled us at this confirmation of our hope.

" Lovers' Leap, eh? " said Dr. Johanna, still with pretended indifference. " What ever for? "

" Two Injuns leapt there a long time ago," said Mr. Atkinson.

" Dashed themselves to death on the rocks below, clasped in a last fond embrace? " asked Dr. Johanna, now scarcely able to control her excitement.

" Shucks, no, sis," said Mr. Atkinson. " Nothin' like that."

" You mean they jumped off that cliff and *lived?* " I asked.

" Didn't say they jumped offen it, bub," said Mr. Atkinson. " I said they leapt."

" Well, what's the difference? "

" Well, sir, I'll tell ye—Consarn it, I can't. M'throat's gone scratchy on me agin."

" Landlord, more ale! " said I.

" Thankee. Drat this foam. Most of it gits in a feller's beard. Sheer waste o' good ale. Well, sir, it was like this. This maiden an' this here brave from the Wassamattawichez tribe fell in love. Made a fine-lookin' pair, too. He was an all-round athlete and could jump better'n any brave in the tribe, an' they called him Standin' High. She was almost as good as he was at track, so they called her Leapin' Trout. Well, things would o' gone all right, but her father promised her hand to an old buck that happened to have a lot o' wampum. So the kids decided to elope.

" One day they slipped away an' met down yander in the ravine, all set to light out fer the West. Well, they git jest underneath the cliff thar when who comes rushin' at 'em from one end o' the ravine but a mob o' her folks in hot pursuit. So Leapin' Trout and Standin' High started for th'other end o' the ravine, but who shows up thar but Got Wampum, th'old buck she was supposed to marry, with a mob o' *his* folks. Escape was cut off.

" Leapin' Trout pulled a pizened arrow out o' her quiver an' cried, ' At least we can die together! ' but her lover stayed her hand. ' Don't puncture yerself,' sezee. ' There is yet a way out.'

" ' Whar? ' s'she.

" ' The cliff up thar,' sezee.

" ' Jump fifty feet straight up? ' s'she. ' Are you crazy, Standin' High? '

" ' You can do it, with a little help,' sezee. ' I got an idea.'

" There was a log restin' a-teeter across a boulder. He told her to stand on the end that touched the ground.

" ' Now,' sezee, ' when I jump on th'other end, you'll shoot up into the air, and when you do, just hunch and scrunch yerself

along all you can an' you'll make the top o' that cliff, understand? It's our on'y chance.'

"'But you, Standin' High,' s'she, 'what'll become o' you?'

"'Don't worry about me,' sezee. 'I'll take off right after ye. Come along. We got no time fer argufication.'

"They didn't, nuther, because by now mobs o' kinfolk was comin' down at 'em from both ends o' the gulch, whoopin' and yellin' like savages, and makin' a reg'lar garboil.

"So Leapin' Trout crouched on the grounded end o' the log. Standin' High sprang up onto a big boulder that was nigh. 'Git ready!' sezee, 'git set! go!' An' with that he jumps offen the boulder onto th'other end o' the log with all his might, an' up shoots the beautiful Indian maiden like a bat out o' hell. You know, the way the acrobats do it in the circus. An', by gum and by golly, she lands on the edge o' the cliff fifty foot above, teeters there a second, then grabs a bush, and hauls herself to safety."

"And what became of Stanley High?" asked Dr. Johanna.

"*Standin'* High!" corrected Mr. Atkinson. "Well, he can't use the log. He ain't got no friend down thar to catapult *him* up. He has to rely on the stren'th the Lord gave him. So he grabs a fifty-foot pine trunk layin' nearby, gits a good runnin' start, takes off, an' sails into the air in as purty a pole-vault as this nation ever see."

"Did he make it?" asked Dr. Johanna.

Mr. Atkinson turned purple and gave out gasping, choking noises. "Landlord, more ale!" I cried. "Hurry!"

Mr. Atkinson quaffed and the spasm passed. "That ale didn't come a minute too soon, bub," he said. "Thirsty work, spinnin' these legends."

"Yes, yes, Mr. Atkinson, but tell us—did Standing High make it?"

"Missed it by ten foot."

"A-a-h, what a pity!" Dr. Johanna mourned. "He fell back on the tomahawks of his enemies?"

"I never said that, sis. He got away all right. But he'd o' bin a gone goose if it hadn't bin fer J. Fenimore Cooper."

"J. Fenimore Cooper?"

"Yep. Standin' High was a great reader, fer an Injun. Allus claimed he learnt everything he knew about Injun lore from J. Fenimore, an' when he left home that mornin' he'd slipped his well-thumbed copy o' *The Deerslayer* into his pants pocket. That saved his life."

"How?" I asked.

"Well, when old Got Wampum reached the spot, jest after

Standin' High took off fer the top o' the cliff, he gave a yell o' baffled rage an' let fly an arrow at his rival's retreatin' form. Old Got Wampum was a good shot."

"He hit Standing High?"

"Right where it done the most good, as things turned out. The arrow passed clean through Cooper's book an' penetrated Standin' High to a depth of mebbe half an inch. Not so deep as a well but deep enough to encourage, as the Bard would say. Standin' High gave a sharp cry an' sprang three more feet into the air."

"And that got him to the top of the cliff?" I asked.

"Nope. He was still shy seven foot."

"So he fell back on the arrows of his foes after all?"

"Not by a durn sight. He grabbed Leapin' Trout by the hair."

"By the hair?"

"Sure. Leapin' Trout had hair seven foot long, like that gal in the fairy-tale."

"Rapunzel?" suggested Dr. Johanna.

"Don't mind if I do," said Mr. Atkinson quickly.

I said, "Landlord, more ale!"

"Thankee," said Mr. Atkinson. "Yarnin' suttinly makes a feller spit cotton. Yep, Leapin' Trout got a good hold onto a tree, let her hair down over the cliff, Standin' High grabbed the hair, an' she hauled him up to safety."

"What an utterly charming legend!" said Dr. Johanna, brushing what I fear was a not quite scientific tear from her cheek.

"They didn't leap *offen* that cliff," said Mr. Atkinson. "They leapt *onto* it. I reckon this here's the on'y Lovers' Leap in reverse in this country, and the on'y one with a happy endin'."

"I can just see old Got Wampum, the disgruntled lover," I chuckled. "I'll bet *his* face was red."

"Why not? He was an Injun," said Mr. Atkinson.

"Did Stanley High and Running Broad live happily ever after?" asked Dr. Johanna.

"Her name was Leapin' Trout," corrected Mr. Atkinson. "Yep, they done all right. Toured fer years with the Pawnee Bill show and retired with a small fortune. I heard tell they had a grandson went to Yale, class of 1922, and he was the best one in all the colleges at vaultin' with the pole."

★ ★ ★

WATERPROOF?

Some circumstantial evidence is very strong, as when you find a trout in the milk. HENRY DAVID THOREAU, *Journal*, 1854

HARRY BLACK

BY

DAVID WALKER

ARGOSY'S

EXCITING NEW NOVEL

OF INDIA

THE pass cut through the head and shoulders of the highest ridge. The walls were vertical. The red rock floor was flat and smooth. The air was still that afternoon. There was a resonance of his breathing in the place.

Harry Black faced north-east at the other end, looking down to a plain and across to mountains. The plain was wooded, with a few patches of cleared land where mustard was yellow and wheat was green, and mixtures of the two were pretty. The jungle itself was not pretty.

The sun cast shadows of the jagged foothills. He was the king of this small castle, dwarfed by the first Himalayan castles, and they in turn, and so on to the battlements of the world. High snows pleased him; but there were none today, for cloud hung down at six thousand feet. Rain? he wondered. It was late for winter rains.

He searched back the other way, tacking from wall to wall. His boots had left rubber patterns at one dusty place. There were no other tracks. He did not think that any animal had come through last night. He paused to consider a nook in the right wall—the only pit or pockmark in this curiously smooth-complexioned cleft. It was a place where a man might sit, or a rifle be wedged and aligned and trigger-tripped. I could set a wire, he thought. He could; but he would not.

Harry Black reached the south-west end of the pass whence he had come. He sat on a rock. The drop was greater here. Ridges swung forward to right and left ahead, a precipitous half-circle, thrusting from the backbone of the foothills.

He sat above one end of an oval of forest, six miles long and three miles wide. This was Rimli. He could see all of it from this high place. The steep upper half of jungle was framed by a horseshoe of red rock ridges that petered out three miles ahead. The flat

lower half of jungle jutted into the open plains of India.

The sun was pleasant on this cool afternoon, and not yet low enough to dazzle him. He felt all right. Harry Black put two fingers in his mouth and blew a spittle-whetted whistle.

Soon Bapu came, a rubbery small man along a goat-track.

"No tiger has gone that way," said Bapu. He meant by a lesser ravine, forking from the one which they had climbed.

"And no tiger has come through the pass."

"I heard the *janwar* speaking," Bapu said again. "I heard the wild things speak this morning early, calling from hither and down to yonder. It might have been a leopard." He cleared his throat, and hummed a blandly tuneless tune. "Who knows what it might have been?"

"Go, disbelieving one," said Harry Black. "Go, famous tracker of tigers, and see for thyself that no tiger has come."

Bapu cackled and went.

Harry Black watched the country from aloft. He heard parakeets and saw them in hurtling flight, green into green of forest, green against brown and white, a graceful discordance of parakeets. Nothing else moved or called below him.

He looked south-west to the far end of the oval of the Rimli jungle, to the plains beyond. He looked half right to the bend of the River Garda. It flowed south-east along below the hills, taking the efflux of the hills. But at Rimli, the Garda turned a full right angle down and away beside the lower forest, and out across the plains. It was a muddy river, bright now against the sun.

Beyond all this was the flat rim of the horizon, broken by one thing only, and that over to the south, on the far side of the forest from the River Garda. It was broken by a sugar-factory chimney, a tall metal shaft, two miles from the forest edge. He had passed it by night on his way to Rimli. He wondered who ran the place. He did not want to meet him.

Bapu returned and sat upon his heels.

"Well?"

"A tiger has come. There is one pug only in one dusty place. But a tiger has come." He hawked mournfully and spat.

Bapu did not lie about tracks. "This tiger?"

"It is a big tiger, sahib. I think it is the Bad One. But the pug is not that scarred pug of the Bad One."

"When?"

"Since the fall of the night wind."

That meant after three or four a.m. "If thou art right, two sups of whisky in place of one. If wrong, not any whisky."

"All day my stomach has been sick for lack of whisky-wine."

Harry Black smiled. He had known Bapu for a week. He liked him. Things would be stirring now in the forest. He saw only parakeets above the forest.

"I am not a man of this country," said Bapu of the jungle tribe. "My people live yonder." He cocked a finger back south-east, which was the run of the mountains' edge. He had said this before,

and in time he would enlarge upon it. " There was bad trouble," he explained. He wore the relics of some employer's grey tweed jacket. " I have been at Rimli many seasons. But now there is wickedness in this place, and now I have dreams that I will die, and now I would go back to my own people. But I cannot go back to my own people. The sahib has the hard way of the soldier, knowing death and having understanding. Therefore I say that I will die here."

Bapu glanced round and away again. " Doubtless Your Honour has been in many wars? "

" In one war only for a short time. I was a captive in that war, a captive of a people who are called Germans. I escaped from them and fled to another country, hiding by day and walking in the night."

" Were you alone, sahib? "

" Yes, I was alone."

" Is that a land of jungles? "

" Of jungles and open fields and hills. There is much jungle." He remembered the German jungle.

" Then a tiger wounded Your Honour, perhaps."

" There are no tigers in that country. But a bomb was hidden in the ground, a small thing on which I stood. This was at the very crossing-place from Germany into the safe country. Thus I was wounded, Bapu, and thus I became free." Free from what? he thought.

" It explains many things about the sahib," said Bapu.

The sun was an hour from setting now at five o'clock. " Cut me a stick." He shaded his eyes with his right hand.

The Rimli jungle was a broken country, seamed and scoured by watercourses, *raos*, sparsely puddled at this season. The jungle was like many others in and below these foothills—with one difference. The enclave lay open to the plains. But from the hills side, from the precipitous half-circle of the horseshoe, Rimli could be approached only by this pass.

" Listen! "

He had not heard; he heard the second time. " *Kyla!* " The alarm call of the chital, the spotted deer. It came clearly and crisply from a long way down. A killer was here. And if Bapu had been right about a single pugmark, that killer could be the Rimli tiger.

" Come! " he said. He slung the double rifle on his left shoulder, took the bamboo staff in his right hand, and led the way. Bapu followed with the single rifle.

It was tricky going for a distance down the steep ravine. Then the slope eased, and they were into jungle—or between jungle, for the watercourse was already thirty yards in width. He gave the stick to Bapu. He unslung the heavy rifle and carried it in his left hand. He walked down the centre, picking a way round white boulders. A party of brown monkeys loped across, and swung up trees, and the branches swayed and were still. They crouched

thoughtfully, monkey-fashion, watching him and Bapu. There was no tiger here.

The hard light of day had softened. He sniffed. Yes, rain, he thought. But the sky was clear behind him above the foothills. He felt a spiced contentment here with this tiger perhaps in the forest. It was long since he had felt contentment.

Bapu touched him and made signs that they separate to inspect two buffs which they had tied out earlier that afternoon.

He nodded. He walked by the left fork. He did not have a feeling of tiger here, but he did not trust such intuitions or the absence of them. Nothing moved in the afternoon shadows. He heard jungle fowl clucking like domestic hens.

He swung right at the first crack of sound. Right was his slow direction, but he was quick enough. His heart beat up. The noise moved across the island, a commotion of grass, a drumming scuffle, a deer. I'm windy, he thought, as his heart dropped back. He was not so much windy as out of practice. He was getting better every day.

Here was the male water-buffalo, tied beside a pool under an acacia tree. Sometimes they lay down as if safe at home. This buff was propped at rope-length, staring downstream. It was shaggily young, and he felt a mild hypocritical compassion when it saw him and relaxed. He had seven tied at various places against the coming of the tiger. They were poor bait for a man-eater, but he had nothing better.

He inspected damp sand between pools across the *rao*. A barking deer had recently passed this way. No tiger had passed this way. Yet he thought from the buffalo's nostrilled stance that danger might be about.

He swung back to the bottom of the island where Bapu waited. He had not seen Bapu shoot, and he did not want to see him shoot; but Bapu held the .318 as a workman holds his particular tool. This was unusual. He was a man of fifty or thereabouts, with the dignity of a grey tweed jacket. The skin showed firm and smooth through sleeve-tatters, and his bare diaphragm bulged solid. This also was unusual in a man of age. Bapu shook his head.

Harry led the way again. They were half a mile from the forest rest-house, which was home for him. The sun was a beneficent saffron ball balanced over treetops down the dry river. Time was short.

He saw the sliver of the new moon. The new moon dipped also, but to a left-hand hill. It was the infant February moon. Being a sound believer in such things, he bowed seven times to the crescent of the February moon. He turned some annas over in his pocket. I wish to kill the man-eater of Rimli, he wished with formality. He did not say in himself and to the moon that he wished to kill this tiger by the end of the waning of this February moon, because he did not want calendars at all. He would have liked to make a second wish—for firm sobriety with a quiet mind. But two wishes were against the rules.

Bapu watched him, smiling. They were in harmony at this time.

They went on. The light was kindly. The first peafowls were lumbering up trees. If the tiger came last night, is the tiger hungry? Old Bapu thinks it crosses soon after killing. Well, I wonder. No alarms at all. No jungle gaffuffle. If it did come, it could be miles away from here.

He reached the entrance to the nullah, which was a short cut home, swinging right, then down to the forest road. He looked once along the main river-bed where the sun was setting beyond trees. The glow of the sky showed also in a pool. It was the good time of the Indian winter day.

He turned into the nullah, a ravine with earth walls taller than a man, grass to either side, trees closing overhead. There was a dim religious light in here, an adequate light still.

He saw the tracks and heard a peacock scream: "*May-awe.*" Then a langur monkey hooted, and the first peacock, and a second peacock farther over. He was right about the place and he was sure about the tiger before he saw Bapu's forefinger pointing, prodding to say unequivocally, *The man-eater of Rimli has just moved there.*

He looked for the rib of scar-gouge running diagonally across the main pad of the left forepaw. It was there, and it was unmistakable, as Bapu had told him.

The tiger had climbed the bank at any easy place. The tiger was not jumping twenty-foot ravines. It was on the prowl.

He followed—up the bank, and between high grass. His leg had been sore after much walking, but it was all right now. He went along the animal path. He had ten minutes or less to play with. He was coming now to the graceful sal trees, beyond them that tangle of grass and scrub. He could be quiet as far as here.

He heard Bapu breathing short and fast. He wondered if he should have let Bapu come in. He saw the langur's silhouette against an umber sky. It sat perfectly still at the drooped end of a branch. It was looking in the right direction.

He knew where the tiger was. He knew because the main watercourse lay beyond it to the left, and the forest road on the fireline was ahead. Both these were open flanks, and he did not think the tiger would cross bare ground before dark. For the next few minutes it might stay where it was; or it might move this way by sparse forest; or it might go back through grass the way it had come.

He did not intend to commit suicide in the gloaming. He required shooting distance. He therefore decided to skirt that patch. He knew that the sal leaves would be noisy underfoot. He would try a little provocation and enticement. He would make his celebrated imitation of a garrulous hag picking up sticks.

But he delayed with his imitation because a car was approaching on the forest road. It came fast from the left, changed down at the watercourse, whined over that, and speeded up. It was a Land Rover, by the sound. Whatever car this was, it spanked and clanked

past the tiger's place and went on at a brisk clip in the direction of the rest-house.

Had the tiger moved? He did not think so. "*Aii!*" he began in a cracked ancient falsetto. "*Aii!*" to placate the forest shaitans. "*Aii! Jangal men bare bare budmashe sher hain.*" Good hag-sounding imitation. Wrong in this way—never annoy the terrible beast by saying *sher*, the beast's own name. Once he had enticed a man-eating tiger thus; and he had shot it.

This tiger moved. He thought that it was coming for him. He was ready in the aim. But it crashed at great speed through cover back the way it had come. There was a fractional silence and resumption as it jumped the nullah. It was a wary and experienced performer. The passage of a car and the wailing of a crone might have been a little too close together.

The tiger's commotion lingered, as sounds do. Then there was shocked quiet in the jungle.

He had lost a first dim chance with the Man-eater of Rimli.

They turned right at the forest road. They were nearly home.

"I told the bara sahib bahadur," Bapu said remotely. "I told the great brave master that a wicked spirit guards the Bad One. How else would Tunna Sahib pass in his motor machine at such a time?"

He looked round at the little man. He refrained from sarcasm about evil spirits. Who had been bowing lately to the moon?

"What wicked sahib is this?" he asked, more lightly than his mood. His leg was sore. He felt washed out and needing five drinks.

Bapu smiled without mirth. "I did not say that Tunna Sahib was wicked. I said that a wicked spirit brought Tunna Sahib at such a time."

"Tunna Sahib?"

"Yes, Your Honour. Tunna Sahib from the sugar factory."

Tunna? For Tunna read Tanna. "And the appearance of this Tunna Sahib?"

"A long fellow, Your Honour, a *bilati* sahib who is at Bondha since the ending of the last monsoon."

Oh God, he thought. Not Desmond Tanner from a sugar factory—and Christian—Christian Tanner, was she there too? He knew the irrational authentic tap of fate.

The jungle ceased to exist for Harry Black. He forgot the tiger; he forgot Bapu's goatish presence. He was back in prison that night—the night of the escape.

. . . Again, he heard the sentries shout, running in, and he saw the flashing shots, and the humpbacked shadows of escaping men, up and on and over the bridged wall. Shots closing. My God, the racket. Ricochet—whee-ee-ow-oh! No machine-guns. Nobody hit.

Eight up on the bridge. Desmond Tanner at the bottom. Shot. Shot. He was not going.

"*Go on, Desmond!*"

But Desmond had turned and broken back and stumbled over the trip-wire by Harry. Desmond had picked himself up and run clear . . .

Desmond had lost his nerve at that last crucial instant, and Harry had gone on alone—to become the prize escape-poodle of 1943.

After months in hospital Harry had been sent to Canada lecturing from coast to coast—and there, for the first time, he had met Christian, Desmond's wife, and given her news of Desmond, but not of course the truth, the all too simple truth about the escape.

" That trip-wire was the snag," Harry had told her. " Desmond stumbled over the bloody thing and fell. It was most damnable bad luck." Did I tell a convincing cock-and-bull? he wondered.

. . . And then, oh God, he thought again. Not Desmond Tanner —here—at the sugar factory.

Harry Black and Bapu crossed the loose-boarded bridge and walked up the drive of the forest rest-house. The mauve afterflush had faded. It was not quite dark. He saw the man coming down to meet them. All his memories of those prison times were clear—he could never forget Desmond Tanner's lanky lope.

" Hullo, Desmond," he called from a distance.

Tanner stopped. " Who's that? "

" Harry Black," he said. " How are you, Desmond? "

The last time had been after nightfall ten years or more ago. Could it be? How could it?

And they will find who linger in the garden
The way of time is not a river but
A pilferer who will not ask their pardon.

If he knew human beings, and Desmond Tanner in particular, he knew Desmond would be suffering the recollection that he suffered.

" I'm damned glad to see you," he said, which he was not; but in a way he was dizzy with gladness to see the man he had liked, disliked, tolerated, bullied, and sometimes loved in that adversity when time had never been a pilferer for Harry Black. Desmond was caressing his moustache. He would now make a triteness.

" How fantastic," he said. " I mean, what a small world it is."

Harry smiled, and they walked together, and the night wind was beginning from the hills.

" It's amazing seeing you, Harry. It's absolutely wizard. But isn't your tea garden near Darjeeling? Have you come after the man-eater? "

" It was," Harry said. " And I have. Been here a week."

" We heard there was a chap at Rimli, so we came to make our number. Also to say, in case you don't know already, that the tiger killed a woman beyond the foothills yesterday, which means no chance here, I suppose. Christian heard it on the wireless. You remember Christian, don't you? Your bearer asked her and young Michael in." His voice tailed off.

" The man-eater came across last night," he said, " thus bearing out Bapu's pet theory." He told Bapu the news of a kill yonder.

" Salaam, sahib," said Bapu, stepping up from anonymity. " The Bad One is again at Rimli."

" Oh," said Desmond in English vaguely. He did not look over his shoulder for tigers in the shadows, nor ask more questions.

" I must drive down to the Range Office to warn them. Go in and get a drink, Desmond, and make my apologies to your wife. I won't be long." But he needed time.

" Let me go, Harry. Yes, I'll go and tell them. My God, how extraordinary it is. Back in a jiffy." Desmond babbled all that out. He got into his Land Rover.

" All right," Harry said. " Tell them to batten down. And tell Tara Singh I'll be along early in the morning."

" Wait," he said on the verandah to Bapu, with whom he had felt the coming of contentment. He took out the two heavy shells and snapped the breech shut and pulled back the side of the unrolled screen.

The door was ajar, and the woman was saying, " Please leave it, Michael. You know Daddy doesn't like you touching guns."

Harry went in. The oil lamp was on the table; the small boy stood beside the rack, looking at Harry's shotgun; Christian Tanner was sitting with her hands out to the fire.

Then she put her hands on the ends of the long wooden arms or leg-rests of the Roorkee chair.

He nearly said, *Do you remember me?* But he said, " It's ages since we met."

" Yes," she said soon. " Yes, Harry. Yes, it's ages, isn't it? How are you? "

The wood was too long, as usual, falling out backwards to the hearth. Dryness was the only good thing to be said for that wood. It takes three logs to make a fire, he considered wisely, pushing the three farther in, criss-cross fashion. They flared up and lent some colour to Christian's face. Harry stood the big rifle in the rack and closed the hinged wooden bar across to hold it safely. There were the same racks in every forest rest-house.

" You're Michael, are you? My name's Harry Black."

" Shake hands properly with Mr.—with Colonel Black, darling."

" Mister," he said. " D'you want to have a look at my rifle? " So he opened the bar and took it out and showed it to Michael. Boys and Bapus Harry understood and liked until they annoyed him.

" Gosh, it's heavy. It's heavier than Daddy's. Have you shot a tiger with it? "

" Yes, I have."

" Lots and lots? "

" Some," Harry said. " How old are you? " he asked.

" I'm eight next birthday—in two weeks. How old are you? "

" Michael, it isn't clever to ask cocky questions back that way." She wore a cotton dress, not trousers like most European women.

" Desmond's gone to give a message to the Ranger, Tara Singh. Which reminds me "—it was indeed time to remember—" I won't

be a minute." He went into the bedroom where his bearer, Cheddi Khan, was lurking. He shut the door.

"The man-eater has come," he said quietly. "Bring thy bedding and sleep here. I do not want a bath tonight. I will eat dinner cooked with the primus stove. Tell Mihtan to bar his house." Mihtan was the caretaker.

"Very good, Your Honour." Cheddi Khan remained impassive through all storms. "The memsahib did not wish drink-things, but drink-things are there. Also glasses."

Harry went back. He poured out Bapu's double tot and took it to the verandah. Bapu swigged it in quick time, neat. Bapu's tribe were topers.

"Hast thou heard the wild things speak?" Harry asked him.

"No, sahib. My ears heard the wind, and my thoughts were of whisky-wine."

"Keep the small rifle, and stand guard while Cheddi Khan moves sundry things to this house. Sleep early, Bapu, and be ready at the dawn. There will be work for us tomorrow."

"Who knows?" said Bapu. "Who knows what will chance tomorrow?"

Harry went in. "Sorry about all that," he said. "Now won't you have a drink? There's whisky, or gin and lime."

"Yes, please," she said. "Yes, perhaps I will. Not much whisky and lots of water."

"How's old Desmond?"

"Just as wonderful and kind as ever," she said with gentleness. "He's terribly overworked at present because of the sugar-crush being on. The sugar factory means an awful lot of responsibility for him."

"I've heard about it," Harry said. "Tea is less hectic and lasts longer."

"Are you a planter still?"

"I was," he said. "I'm on leave pending retirement, or pending the polite push. I've had tea, and tea's had me, to sum the matter up."

"Oh, I see," she said. "Don't be so fidgety, Michael darling."

"Look at that magazine if you want to." Harry watched her drink, and he wanted whisky.

"I can't see," said Michael, bored and alone. "Not even magazine pictures prop'ly."

"Cheddi Khan!"

"Huzoor?" Cheddi was back again. He always contrived mysteriously to be back again. Which was annoying too.

"Bring the Petromax."

"I remember your wedding photo in the *Tatler*. Your wife looked charming."

"Divorced," he said. Hiatus in the conversation.

Pending the Petromax, he turned the oil lamp higher. He put on more crumbling apology for wood.

"How is your leg, Harry?"

"No trouble at all," he said. "It's a red-hot leg." Strictly the truth. "Dust makes it kick up," he said, "sometimes." He wished they would go so that he could take it off.

"What's wrong with your leg?" Michael was a good-looking child, as he might well be. Bleached and brown from the winter sun. But petulant.

"It's a tin one." Harry undid the dust-excluding buttons, loosened his jungle boot, and rolled down the sock. "It's aluminium," he said, "not tin. How's that for a beauty of a tin leg?"

Michael was enchanted. "Does it go far up? I mean, is it all tin?"

"Only halfway to my knee."

"Have you always had it?"

"He hasn't always had it," Christian said. "He lost his leg by being brave."

"I lost it by running away like a dose of salts." But he was pleased.

"You say very funny things," said Michael in a minute. "Shall I call you Harry?"

"Michael!"

"Do," he said. "Call me anything you like, excepting Uncle, which I do not tolerate."

"I could call you Long John Silver. Mummy and I were reading that."

"Plain Harry is best, perhaps. A drink, Christian?"

"No, thank you." She stared at the fire. "Desmond is being such ages. What did he go to tell them?"

"He went to say that the man-eater is back in its pristine haunts."

"*Here*, you mean?"

"Yes, here."

"But the Land Rover may have broken down. Why didn't you say?" Her eyes flickered to Michael and round the room.

"It's quite safe in a car," he said irritably. He went out.

The wind was loud now in the trees, and the rain-smell was stronger. He loved to listen to that wind at night. The stars were dusted on black velvet. He had come here for various reasons; and a man-eating tiger was but pleasurable spice.

He saw headlights in the forest. "Desmond's coming," he called to placate her. But he waited outside while the lights swung away and back. He heard the Land Rover's practical whine coming up the drive.

"Tara Singh went to ground the moment I told him," Desmond said. "So I had to warn them all myself."

"He's a useless blighter."

Desmond laughed, and Harry felt better, and they went in.

"Darling, I thought you were never coming." She smiled up at him.

Harry took half his daily ration of whisky.

Desmond ranged about the room with a glass, and his toes turned out. He sat on the edge of the table and swung a leg. He sucked

air like a bird's alarm "*tseep*" through that tooth. He had the same true-blue godly sahib's face, but a quieter face. "You're thinner, Harry," he said with love. "How are you?"

Harry smiled. He was happy because Desmond felt all right about it; he was happy mostly because of the years vanished between now and then. He did not understand that or anything worth understanding. "I'm O.K., cock," he said.

"What about the tiger?" Michael asked. Nobody answered him. He was drawn to the rifle-rack again.

"Leave it," Harry said, thinking of other things.

Michael continued to fiddle.

"Look boy, when I say leave it, I mean leave it."

Michael left it. Christian frowned. Desmond laughed. "Same deadly Harry Black," he said. "Fancy seeing you here. Isn't it marvellous, Christian?"

"It's lovely," she said. "So few people come up. Now tell us about the tiger, sparing the gore. Desmond has sat up for it twice, and I have the worst heart attacks each time. I do wish you'd shoot it quickly."

"I will," he said. He was now fully determined in the matter.

"I wouldn't be too confident, old boy. Forty-seven in nine months, and nobody's fired anything but a muzzle-loader at it yet. But what's this theory of Bapu's?"

"I'll go back to the beginning," Harry said. In his good days he used to go back to beginnings; and here was a straight beginning to go back to. He forgot about the Tanners while he talked.

"Some bunnia sportsman came shooting last April. He sat up a tree and wounded a tiger. Bapu says he hit it in the left foreleg. There was no elephant available for a safe pursuit. So what did he do? He sweetened Tara Singh—fifty or a hundred chips, I suppose—to keep his mouth shut. Nobody followed up. Nobody even reported the wounding. That is Bapu's story, and it may not be true, because he hates the Ranger's guts. But I think it's true. Two weeks later a lame tiger started on human beings. One month and seven kills later—just before the monsoon—things were getting chaotic." Harry paused. "But you know all this."

"I haven't heard it put together properly. Go on, Harry."

"Things were so chaotic that they called in the Army. The only snag was that they omitted to man the pass of Rimli which hardly shows on the one-inch map. All the locals wanted was to get rid of the animal, so they weren't recommending plugs for loopholes. The beat was a crashing success with tommy-guns and everybody trigger-happy. But, I need hardly mention, no tiger. It had slipped over early in the proceedings. Furthermore, it had found a shuttle-road.

"That's the beginning," Harry said. "And that's about all. The country beyond the foothills gives a man-eater far more scope —three hundred square miles or more, as opposed to about twenty square miles at Rimli. Which is why the great majority of the kills have been over there."

He stood up to pump the Petromax. It was a nasty, useful light, reminding him of prison. Desmond watched him. Christian did not. He wondered if Desmond would like to reminisce. He pumped till it roared white and naked, and he sat down.

" There hasn't been a kill here for six weeks," Desmond said. " But we know it switches—an occasional one at Rimli, several a month beyond. That's been the form since we came in October. So what is Bapu's special idea? "

" His idea is that it always crosses soon after a kill. First thing he said this morning was that he heard the *janwar* speaking in the night, and that the Bad One had come. Sure enough it has, and sure enough it killed a woman yesterday. Chance perhaps, but they're creatures of habit, even man-eaters. The next item on Bapu's programme is an animal kill in a day or two, then do its stuff and off again. That's what I'm here to see about."

" Why at Rimli? " Christian asked. " If most of the people are killed beyond? "

" Because this is a limited area, and the other isn't. Here you can get quick news and get to the spot. When I decided to come, I took a look at a map, and thought Rimli was the best hope. With a tracker like Bapu, and a bit of luck, I can make a job of it." He would make a quick job of it now if it did not make a quick job of him. " Have a fill-up, Desmond."

He got more for himself too. He would have an extra one tonight. The longer they stayed, the more extras he would have. He felt quite good and cheerful; the Tanner complications did not greatly matter.

" I can think of a million things to ask you," Desmond said. He did not ask them. He was a sensitive chap, with a kindness for other people's troubles; and he lived quietly with his own troubles. That was what he used to be like under a mantle of good looks and bonhomie and mundane remarks. He was not at all clever. He laughed at witticisms but never made them.

" Once you two start remembering, I know you'll never stop. We *must* go, darling. It's long after Michael's bedtime, and I don't relish nocturnal excursions." Christian smiled at her son. She was more beautiful and less pretty.

" I was thinking," Michael said. " I was thinking you're a bit lame and the tiger's lame. That's sort of funny."

" The tiger is hardly lame at all now, Michael. Which means it can kill wild animals as well as people, and that makes it a very bad and difficult kind of man-eater for anyone to shoot."

" Can you come over tomorrow evening? Bondha's only five miles or so."

" Depends on what develops," he said carefully. " May I just blow in the first chance I get? "

" As long as you do." There was no strain at all between them. " He always was a hermit type at heart, Christian."

" Was he? Well, do come."

They were leaving at last. Not quite. " By the way, Harry, I'd

like to be in on the tiger if you want me. We're pretty busy, but I can always sneak a few hours off. I know my experience is nil compared with yours." He said it in a hurry and left it in the air. It hung about the air. His wife sighed.

" Many thanks," Harry said. " I shall probably take you up on that. I detect feminine objections, but that's your affair." Well and lightly said. He intended to do the job alone. Then he said, " Good night, all you Tanners."

" Good night," she said. " Take care."

" Good night, Plain Harry. Please come soon."

He laughed at Plain Harry. Everyone laughed. " Out of the mouth of babes," Desmond said inevitably. They left.

Next day, tattered Bapu, famous tracker of tigers, was the high priest of the affair. It was amusing to see the tall Moslem, Cheddi Khan, and the dapper forest guard defer to him. Their voices rang about, and faded lower down the glade. Safely away, and he was alone, never alone in jungle places.

The machan was a wooden framework, criss-crossed with string, roped from ring-bolts to the tree. He sat with his back against the trunk, his knees drawn up, the rifle resting on them. He had a clear view down to the kill, a leaf-chinked view to either side. The haversack hung from a branch. No loose objects. He was as comfortable as could reasonably be, although comfort would not last for long. He had tested the torch apparatus for alignment. It threw a beam even now in sombre afternoon. It was a clumsy contraption, clamped above the barrels.

Thunder grumbled outside the periphery of stillness. It was nearly half past four. He had been away three hours or so.. Nothing had come while Bapu held the fort. Then time frittered in tying the machan. The fretting and the frittering of time.

Thunder sounded from several directions. There was a segment of clear sky above the plains. But dusk was arriving early in this glade. Lightning played now on shadow patterns.

A click? A touch of twig on twig? I wouldn't be surprised. Now is the time, before the storm, before night falls.

Harry began to turn his head, slowly to the right, slowly as the progress of a slug upon a cabbage. He saw the tiger, only its ruffed face, large and male.

He could shoot only straight in front. His heart made its lively tiger-pump. It still made that, and always would. He was a high-tensile performer.

Harry heard the wind a long way off. It made a plaintive and peculiar cough. It marched up from Bondha where Christian Tanner lived. It rushed now at the lower fringes of the Rimli forest. He watched the tiger; the tiger had not moved. The wind grew and the jungle groaned.

It was coming; it was roaring; it was nearly here; it must be here. A frail thing am I in my spindly tree. The tiger's face had vanished. Harry made a first overt movement and clung to the

tree-trunk, and the wind did come. It arrived mightily, warmly thrashing and blasting the close, present world. It had arrived and it was gone, and the whipped trees rose again, but some were falling, and many boughs were crashing.

Is violence my true love? Is peace the aftermath and the aperitif?

He watched the bushes where the tiger had been. Had it been? Certainly it had been. His machan, or elevated bedstead, was tilted now. He wedged himself for safety but at the cost of comfort. His stump throbbed under lateral pressure. He hoped that it would go to sleep.

The plains wind had blown over the hills and far away. Now another one came, but this was a cold mountain wind. He knew what this storm was doing. This storm was sneaking down the horseshoe ridge, close to his defenceless head. Rain joined the wind. This lambasted all the thunder but the large explosions. This swallowed up the wind. This was rods of water in the violet flashes. But this was different. It was cold.

He crouched on his groundsheet, he and his rifle with the torch attachment. The wise and prudent laid down their guns when thunderstorms were raging. Trees drew lightning, and guns were apt to sizzle. Harry huddled on his swaying tree. He was cold and wet and tiny. Little Harry Black afraid of nothing but now afraid of thunder. Be brave, he told himself. They often called him brave when he was fearless.

Time went by fits and starts, by teeth chattering, by two stealthy swiggings from his flask, by ephemeral inward glow, by false departure of the storm, by true departure from the present me.

The storm flickered to extinction to a destination to the south. The wind died and trees dripped. The earth was loud with water in the middle of the night. The sky was lovely in the middle of the night, the famous jewelled velvet of my India, my love.

Things moved in the forest while Harry sat. It was dark but not black dark. The trees cut the sky; their dead sambar was the dim bundle underneath. They had tied a rope from that tree to the sambar's neck. The kill must be anchored against the power of tiger, who could remove six hundred pounds of property as easily as you could lift your suitcase.

There were no tiger indications. Harry heard elephant behind him. They were feeding on bamboo. He heard the splintering and swishing a hundred yards or so away.

The wind, the light airs, puffed sporadically from him to them. He hoped they would not pick him up. His tree was stout enough to ride out a storm, not elephants.

The bamboo noises stopped. They had gone away, perhaps. Elephant moved with careless noise, or in uncanny quiet. The back of Harry's neck began to tingle. The stream was loud. He turned on his tilted perch. This was not easy. The blood ran painfully into numbness. He had heard aright. An elephant faced him at the corner of the glade, at the place where the tiger had moved *ahisti ahisti*, slowly slowly, yesterday in Bapu's words.

He could see the *multhna* well enough by starlight. The ears moved. The trunk quested about but did not curl. If the black mood of *musth* was on it, things could be troublesome. People thought sitting up trees was a tame, picnicking form of sport. Go, bloody elephant, do go. I cannot go my several ways in peace, but you go yours. I do not want to kill you.

The elephant skirted his tree, followed by the smaller tusker. Any sound they made was below the splashings of the stream. They had the ponderous lightness of some wonderful big ladies. They passed down the glade, and out of sight.

It was half past four. This was tiger-time before the dawn. Harry watched and listened and was not altogether here. He was up there in Mars, and he was over there at Bondha. He was in other places too. But he saw the tawny planet, and he heard a grinding of the crushing of the cane, a factory murmuration, that was all. No tiger. *I must go over there tonight, whether I finish the job or not, I really must.*

Night wore a paler rim above the eastern hills. Jackals howled before the dawn. "*A-ee*," they yelped. "*A-ee.*" An epidemic to and fro and round about, demented ululation—stopped.

Small masticating noises on the other side, chop of jaws. What? now what would that be? Something scavenging, the vulture. It stopped too. The glade was changing quickly, hardening to the many entities of day.

Slowly! he adjured himself. Quietly now! The tiger stood broadside, head lowered to its kill. It was just light enough to see the pattern of the stripes, not light enough for a sure positioning of sights. It was the right tiger, from accounts.

He switched on his beam. The tiger's head whipped round.

The ivory bead was behind the great bulge of shoulder. He fired. The recoil punched him off precarious balance, and he saved himself. The tiger exploded through grass, across the glade, and up the rocky slope. Silence. A slow heavy roll and tumble back. The legs thrashed. It lay in the open. He knew that he had shot it in the heart. He gave it the other barrel. A tame end to the Rimli man-eater.

Harry waited up his tree. He lit a cigarette. It tasted very good.

He hung the rifle by the sling. He had been lucky not to fall out of the machan, which was tilted twenty degrees or thereabouts. Day was here, but the sun had not yet reached above the hill. He finished the cigarette and tried to beat out his cramps. They would have heard the shots. He could not get down alone.

The Land Rover came. They hailed him from below, from the Elephant's Pool, he would suppose. And here they were—Bapu in his hallowed jacket; Cheddi Khan, the urbane rogue; the forest guard, a dressy fellow.

Bapu went to the tiger and knelt and turned at once.

"Oh sahib," he called across to Harry Black. "This one is not the Bad One."

"OH gosh," said Michael from his perch, "I thought you were never coming." His was not a child's pony but an arab of grace and quality, a chestnut gelding about fourteen hands.

"That's a nice pony. What's his name?"

"Adonis. Daddy says it's a wrong name for an arab. I'm allowed to ride him in the garden. He has a lovely mouth until he really gallops, and then he takes a hold. Did you come about anything special or did you just come?"

Good question. "I came to tell you that I shot a tiger this morning early, but it was the wrong one. Hullo, Christian."

"A tiger! Gosh, tell me."

"Hullo, Harry." She was wearing a tweed coat and skirt. "You weren't out in that awful storm last night, were you?"

"Yes," he said. "I palpitated up a tree."

He told Michael about last night, and about the puzzle of the man-eater. "So I've decided to go to Ranipur."

"Doesn't it wear you out, never knowing what lurks behind your back and around the corner, and not enough sleep?"

"Bapu is a great help. He's the only genuine jungle man I know. But it does tend to be an edgy performance."

"The snows are wonderfully near this evening. They invite you to come and they turn you down so coldly. I can't explain."

He looked over the toy hills of Rimli to the mountains. He wondered what she would have said about Kanchenjunga opposite his tea garden. Soon now the sunset would climb these lesser peaks, and the flush would grow and die.

"Michael, ask Manoo Lall to put the drinks on the verandah, then run over and tell Daddy that Mr. Black is here."

"I won't say Mr. Black, I'll say Plain Harry like he said."

The pink snows were fading now. The half moon was high. The grinding of the sugar-cane groaned up and down and on and on and night and day with juiced monotony. "Your flowers are good. Are you a gardener?"

"Yes," she said. "I love it. Shall we go in and have a drink? Every time I look at Rimli I think of a horrible tiger's face, and I

worry about Michael. But Desmond says it's safe here with all that open land between us."

" It is," he said, providing the comfort and confirmation. They walked in the scent of sweet peas and syringa, and in the smell of after-rain. The drink tray was on the verandah.

He knew how arrogant and foolish he had been even to imagine he might be too welcome here. He saw that the family house was built upon a rock at Bondha. He was glad that he had come. " I like that boy of yours," he said.

" It's astonishingly mutual. Did you have any children, Harry? Do you, I mean? "

" We had a son," he said. " Lived a month." He poured out his drink. He said no, if people ever asked. Now he had said yes.

" You know," said Christian, looking from the lighted verandah to darkness, to the moon-etched snows, " it was extraordinary the other evening how you and Desmond might never have been apart."

" Well," he said, " if you get to know a chap in dirty weather, you know him well enough for keeps."

" But people change, I think, don't you? I have, completely."

" As between prison pals, changes don't change much."

" Desmond has missed you," Christian said. " Have you missed him? "

" Yes," he said. But he had not missed Desmond these last years.

He had hoped to avoid a private conversation, and she had contrived a private conversation. He would give her a chance to say her say.

" I wanted to see Desmond after the war," Harry said. " But there was the skeleton of a complication . . ."

. . . Canada, 1943. The year after his escape from Oflag VII Y— Harry could see her now in those denim trousers they called blue-jeans, rolled nearly to the knee, and a pale blue workshirt, and they were sailing for an island in the bay. She had told him the island's name, but he had forgotten.

" How well did you know Desmond?" Christian had asked him.

" For a year in Calcutta. We shot snipe together, and I took him after a tiger once up-country. We met at the Saturday Club and parties and so on. We got to know one another pretty well."

" Was he the same?"

" Yes," he said, " more coltish but the same." He might have said that Desmond had been lighter-hearted then, but he had not said that to Desmond's grass widow of four years, five summers.

They had sailed on the starboard tack on a bright sea to an island where there was one fisherman's house. The fisherman helped them to moor the boat to his running-line.

" What's the weather going to do?" Christian had asked the fisherman.

He looked south-east. He was a plain middle-aged man. " Hold up," he said, " but the fog will be in by half ebb." The fog lurked

low and innocent along the rim of sea. " Make yourselves at home," the fisherman had said, waving his hand about his island. " Plenty blueberries for the picking." He went to the door of his white house and turned to watch them.

" Let's pick blueberries, Harry, shall we? "

Christian and he had picked blueberries and drunk beer and eaten their lunch. It had been a fine day until the fog threatened.

The fisherman hauled in the boat. " Come any time," he had said. " I like seeing young folks around the place—my boy was lost in English waters."

" Oh, I'm sorry," Christian had said.

" You got any kids, you people? "

She had shaken her head, and put her left hand with the gold ring on the finger on the gunwale of the sailing-boat and gone aboard and held her other hand out to Harry. He was clumsy getting into a boat.

" Good-bye," they called to the lonely fisherman. " Thank you very much."

" Good luck," the fisherman had answered, and pushed them off. They sailed before the light fog wind.

" Don't cry," he had said to Desmond's wife. " Don't cry, my love."

" It would have been all right. It would have been all right. It would have been quite all right except for that sad kind man seeing we were happy. I wouldn't be crying, and you wouldn't have said, would you, Harry? "

" No," he had answered. " I would not have said."

" . . . I was learning Desmond again through you, and being with him almost, and I knew you were tired out and your leg was bad and you couldn't be bothered with people. But crowds and crowds of people, that's what we should have done. It isn't your fault, Harry, not one little bit. It's me."

" Of course it is my fault," he had said.

" And last night when you insisted on telling me about that horrible, wonderful escape, I knew then that it wasn't my dear good Desmond I wanted to learn about and know about, it was you, and I was hating myself and being so unkind, I just couldn't help it." Harry could still hear Christian's voice as she told her story.

" Desmond came by the Pacific that time in 1939, and he had introductions to people in Toronto. Anyway, we met, and I was twenty, and he was just that rare kind of good Englishman wanting to give people more than he gets and never looking down his nose, and pure in heart, which sounds so phoney but absolutely isn't about Desmond, and so good-looking. He went on to England, and then the war came, and he cabled and asked me to marry him.

" I went over and we were married and we were happy in those queer months till January when he went to France. Not very physical, perhaps. It happens to hundreds of people, and they never know unless the lightning hits them. I'm old-fashioned, I suppose, but there's that rude saying about making your bed and lying on it. That's all. I had to tell you this one and only time."

" There's nothing rude about it. It makes sense. Nor is there anything rude in me wanting you like hell." He had looked at her. She sat at the tiller, and he on the seat forward, so that he was looking at her and at the island of the fisherman.

" We could have laughed together in the night," he said.

" We have everything to remember because nothing at all, and nobody knows till they have been sad and happy in this unbelievable way, and we never will laugh together in the night."

" God knows we're only human."

" My poor Harry, your leg has been hurting you all day. I can tell now when it does, from something in your face."

" Don't you mind the idea of it? wouldn't a stump of a leg offend you? "

" Offend me? How idiotic can you be? "

It was true about the leg. The pain had not been steady. It had thrust at him and gone away and thrust again. It was a hellish little bitch of an intermittent pain.

" It makes a wonderfully complete nothing," Christian had said. " Not even holding hands."

" I love your hands," he had told her. " I love your hands."

" Could you take off the tin bit and lay your leg on the seat beside me? " Christian had asked.

He did that.

He had watched her hand with Desmond's ring. He was sorry. He was happy. She had not asked him if her hand had banished pain.

And now Christian was smiling round at him in her lively charming way. " The skeleton of a complication," she repeated, " but dead and buried long ago, the kindest, maddest complication that never happened, did it? "

" No," he said. " It never happened."

" Desmond and I are very happy, Harry."

" I know," he said. " It's good to see."

Now he thought it quite ironical that he should be the meeting point of one line from Desmond Tanner's corner and one line from Christian Tanner's corner, a private, dead, and buried line from each, the skeleton triangle.

" What's Desmond up to? I drive miles to see the man, and he closets himself in a sugar factory."

" It's labour trouble. But you'll stay for dinner, Harry, won't you, and see Desmond? "

" Many thanks. But I think I'd better be getting back."

" Desmond will be so disappointed if you go. Can't you forget about that animal for one evening? "

" I can," he said. " I have, in fact. But I must make an early start tomorrow without a headache."

" Your tiger friend," said Christian. " Such a pity you couldn't teach it to drink whisky." She went out to give Michael his bath.

He did not bother to consider meanings of that peculiar and tiresome remark. But he considered the inconsequent, sharp wits

of Christian Tanner, serenely happy with a handsome, good, and rather simple husband at a sugar factory in India, and a boy the apple of her eye. He was jealous, but he wished them well.

He felt the good sad warmth of three reasonable drinks. He flew over the hills and far to the moon-cold mountains. It would be good to listen to Sibelius. I wish he had written a Himalayan symphony, not programme music I don't mean, but a high austerity of cold above a sexuality of heat, unendurable pain and pleasure ineffably transcended. I'm the male animal. I can't sit unstirred by the golden silken woman in her tweeds. And she knows it, and it pleases her, and she isn't having any, and has no inclination. Which is the difference between man and woman. But what I have to feel and what I would do are perfectly distinct. Even if I were able, I would not play the cuckoo in this nest. I'm glad I came and found that out. What about another one? But here is Desmond.

" I'm frightfully sorry, old boy. I've been trying to persuade these hopeless people. I expect Christian explained."

Harry listened to the voice of Michael beyond a door, the rubbery pad of servants in a well-ordered house. In the old days they made a different noise, barefooted.

Desmond paused, looked round him, and said quietly, " It was damned good of you to go and see Christian that time in Canada."

Damned good of me! he thought. " I'd seen numerous P.O.W. wives in England," Harry said. " Why not Christian when I was over there? "

" I don't mean that. I mean what you told her about my escape fiasco."

He supposed it had to come. " You stumbled over the trip-wire. That's what I remember happening."

" No, it isn't, Harry. And you know it."

" Can't I remember what I remember? "

" You're lying," Desmond said. " But what a wonderful bloody man you are. Let's have a drink."

He saw relief light Desmond's face, the thing spoken out at last. " One more drink then," he said to cover up. " One more, and just one, and so on. That's my trouble, except lately on this tiger job."

" Much? "

" A bottle a day for a year or two. Steady, private, as opposed to secret, soaking."

" I often think how lucky I am."

" You are," said Harry, " and so is Christian. Schlanch! "

" Skol! " It was their old toast, drinking hooch in prison when he got drunk but Desmond never did.

They discussed the man-eater situation up to date. Then Desmond said, " If you're determined to go to Ranipur tomorrow, I've got an idea. I know a wizard *jheel* about twenty miles along that road, and the duck are in. Why don't I bring the family along and we'll shoot it in the morning and have a picnic lunch? Then you

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"There are LSJ students all over the world."

can go on to Ranipur. Meet at the rest-house, say, at seven. All right?"

Half a day would make no difference, and one more time to say good-bye would make no difference. Nothing much made any difference. "All right," he said, "let's do that."

And here was Christian, changed for dinner. Desmond jumped up, clipped her round the waist, and waltzed her down the verandah. "Wife," he said, "you're on a picnic at dawn tomorrow. Get cracking about food."

She stared at him. "Darling! what's got into you? You haven't done a thing like that to me for years."

"I know," he said. "But I haven't seen old Harry Black for years."

Christian Tanner smiled at Harry. "Dear Harry Black," she said.

He said good night to Michael in his bed, and went. He thought he had done well for once. The whisky died in him along the road to Rimli.

The sun was not yet above the Rimli hills, the sky was a good clear blue, the forest was a rain-washed green. Harry sat on the lip of the verandah, drinking tea. It was the first Sunday in the month of February, and birds were singing. The bloody little birdies sang for joy or love or something. Dew made an infinity of spectra in that open place below him. The grass tops swayed to a slow, eccentric passage. He supposed it would be a pig, rootle-rootle, busy pig.

He would like to hear the bell of a small church where he might go alone. *Come, Harry, my son, and I will tell you of peace and understanding.*

But there was no such peal for him. Only his doom bells pealed this Sunday morning. *What is the point?* they said to him. *Why another journey on the road to nowhere?*

The years as a boy, the years as a subaltern before the war, the years as a planter since. They made nearly half his life. He would not say that he loved the place, or that he ever could belong; but India was better known to him than England. And there was an odd thing too—that this free India was his much more than the India of the ruling days had been his India. He could not tolerate the concept of a subject race.

He saw nothing clearly now. He saw no purpose now. He saw a parade of bottles leading to an exit.

"The baggage is loaded," said Cheddi Khan. "The men are waiting."

Harry stood up. His leg was giving him mild gyp. He had been doing too much. He went to the front of the bungalow, where they waited.

He owed nothing to the chowkidar and sweeper, the man who brought the wood, the carrier of water, the two forest guards, the boy who grazed his buffaloes by day.

there's always time for

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ANOTHER OF NESTLÉ'S GOOD THINGS

He paid them well. The water-carrier asked for more, and was told fluently where he could go and what he could do and why. The others laughed. He wished he could deal with himself as well as he could deal with them.

There was unsharpness in his head, but not a headache. He looked about the Rimli enclave, a jigsaw of watercourse and forest; at parakeets, lemon-green in the early sun, flying so freely, crying so shrilly, of all birds the ones he liked most to watch, physical grace without complication. He looked up to the red rocks of the heights of Rimli. He did not want to leave this place. Each place he left now was another filament broken in the thread.

Why not, said the strong devil in him, why not give up this wild-goose tiger-chasing round to Ranipur, and stay near Bondha for a week or two? They want to see you.

He stood on the gravel turnabout before the rest-house. The men were at one side. Cheddi Khan was at the car.

"Until now," said Cheddi Khan, "until now Bapu has not come." He had told Bapu that they would leave at seven, an hour after the rising of the sun. It was not time yet.

He heard a sound. He swung instantly to listen. Could it be? He ran dot-and-carry-one to the side of the rest-house where he had drunk his second mug of tea. The sound came from beyond that open place where dew was drying now upon the grass and where he thought a pig had rootled. It was a stridor, a frenetic clash of human voices, a high male jabber. "Rifles, Cheddi!" he called back. But his true henchman, Cheddi Khan, had both rifle cases out of the car already.

What lay over there? A large *rao*, a lesser large one, a lopped herring-bone of small nullahs draining the plains-thrusting ridge. In the eye of his mind the setting was accurately mapped. The Katha concession? That was it. The place where they axed tawny chips of khair wood, boiled them in pots, cooled the hellbrew or broth extraction for khaki dye and for the red mouth-staining stuff that Indians chewed with *pan*.

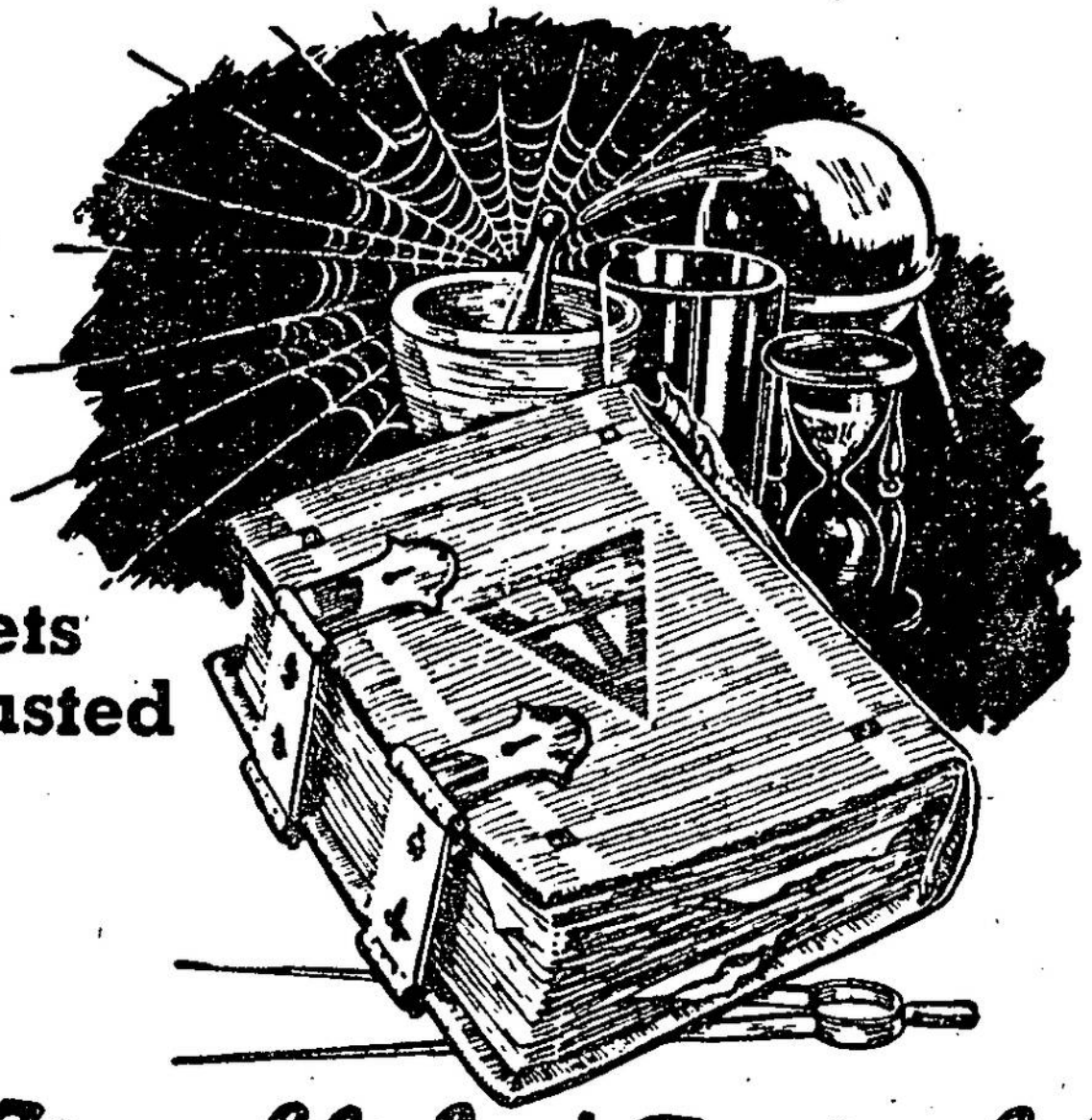
Several families lived there in shacks within a tiger palisade, a sort of zariba of pointed stakes. With the gate shut, it was undoubtedly tigerproof. The Katha people slept securely. But they had to go down to the *rao* for water. He knew also that they relieved themselves outside. He had observed the crouching men and women at all India's fashionable hour of dawn.

"Glasses, Cheddi!" He saw them now. He put up his binoculars. A good deductive guess—they were the Katha people, six men shouting as they ran.

Bapu? where the hell was Bapu?

They were coming across the open place, not sensibly in single file, letting a leader break trail through grass, but all anyhow, hugger-mugger.

He distinguished a word in the torrent of words: *mara*. Killed. He saw the pig break out. He had been right in thinking it was a pig. He was suspicious of being right too often. They straggled



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up the rise. They arrived and flung themselves in all but the literal sense upon him. Six men, including a well-built youth with a baby in his arms, a naked boy. The child howled; the men gabbled; this youth alone was silent, his heart fluttering the sleek skin of his chest. He wore a vacuous half-smile like the village idiot on a bus excursion. Six and an infant, making the lucky number seven.

" Be silent! " he commanded. He pointed his finger at the man among them. " Speak, thou! "

It was the wife and mother of the youth and baby. She had given him the child, and she had gone to the *rao* at break of day. Others had seen her move apart, to the first corner where the bank jutted. She was a modest woman. She was a modest, young, obedient wife. The sahib might know the place? Yes, he knew it. She had not come back to feed her baby, and in a while her husband called because it was time for him to start the chipping of the khair wood. No answer.

So on from there. It was the perfect, inevitable story, the thing that happens with a pattern so neat that you know afterwards it was bound to happen. There was even this additional adornment: that Harry had observed the modest woman. He had observed her with a male eye the other day because she was a young and comely wench. She watched him, and she bared her left breast and held it in her left hand for the small seeking mouth. *I am woman*, she had told him not modestly and not immodestly. *See*

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me, man, black or brown or white or yellow. I bring you forth and I take you in. He remembered this now. He had an absurd trick of remembering things and linking them with Harry Black as Jonah.

They had found the place, and they had found the beginnings of the trail. Had they followed? A chorus again, excluding the young husband, who now began to weep. He wept, and his wife's baby wailed. No, they had not followed. They had been afraid. They had come running for the sahib.

He was thinking in a hurry. He let the vociferous tide roll on. But, of a sudden, it had stopped. The electric hush was as positive as the chatter had just been. Even the adult weeping ceased.

Bapu came running down the low ridge astride which the rest-house stood.

" Oh sahib," he panted, " the Bad One is still at Rimli. I have found fresh tracks crossing from here to there." He made his graceful waving gesture, north-west to south-east across the upper forest.

They all stared at Bapu—these men, and the men Harry had lately paid. There was a curious quality of fear and fascination in their faces.

" Sahib, we must make haste," said Bapu. " The Bad One has not killed at the Katha place before. If it has gone down, the chance is bad." By down, he meant in the plains direction. " If it has climbed below the ridge, the chance is better."

Which was what Harry himself was thinking. Pin the brute down, that was the problem.

" Cheddi! give me the Barking Dogs."

Cheddi smiled and brought the fireworks.

The forgotten Tanner family now arrived. They romped briskly up in their sugar-factory Land Rover. " Sorry if we're slightly late," said Desmond. " You know what these women . . ." Then he took the situation in.

Harry thought instantly: I hope to God he hasn't brought his rifle. This was not a reflection on Desmond Tanner, but simply that there had been only two men in Harry's life whose partnership he welcomed on these occasions. They knew their stuff calmly from immense experience. " I'm afraid you'll have to count me out of the ducks today," he said.

Desmond was speaking. He knew, of course, what Desmond said: " The ducks can count me out as well, old boy. I brought my double rifle. I'll come along."

" Oh darling, please don't go."

" I'll do the job alone," said Harry. " I always do."

Desmond jumped out. He stood with his back to them in the car, looking down at Harry. He was a good deal taller. " Look, Harry," said Desmond, " let me come." He did not seem excited. He seemed cool and determined. But what he was saying was this: *Let me come, my friend. I must prove myself again to you:*

Harry's sensibility told him that, and his sensibility told him that here was a thing he could not deny to the man who was his friend.

" All right," he said. " Have it your own way."

Desmond went for his rifle. Christian took his place. She put that blasted exquisite kind hand on Harry's hairy arm, and said, " Please, Harry, couldn't you stop him? I've had the most awful hunchy feeling ever since I woke. I don't know what. Couldn't you, Harry, please? "

His mind worked fast and true, as always in emergency. He could not stop Desmond, and he could not explain the trivial why to Desmond's wife, not the only one with hunchy feelings. " Look, Christian," he said, " I'm not old Desmond's keeper." Meaning it well, he said it roughly.

" No," she said, " you're not anybody's keeper. You use people, that's all, don't you, to suit your domineering self."

" Many thanks," he said. He turned his back on Christian Tanner.

The Land Rover had been unloaded. Cheddi Khan was the rare one who thought essentials out and did them. The tent, the bedding-rolls, the lamps, the tigerskin, the pots and pans, and other junk were strewn about. Cheddi and Bapu sat in the back with rifles. He could do with one more if it was to be a large-scale party. " Come with us, brother," he said to the dapper one of the forest guards, " and give us loving comfort."

They laughed immoderately and incongruously at his tight little joke. He got in. Desmond sat beside him, long legs arranged, and the door slammed with a tinny aluminium clank.

" Good luck, Plain Harry," said Michael at his window. " And Daddy."

" Dear boy," he said. He raised his hand to Christian, who stood away. Her lips said something.

He might have used the forestry elephant on this first level ground, for the blood trail advertised itself, and the kans grass was uncomfortably tall. But he had sent her along to the D.F.O.'s camp ten miles away. No elephant.

They went in single file, Harry first, Bapu, Cheddi with the single rifle, forest guard, Desmond. " I lead," he had told them. " Or Bapu leads. The front is mine. Bapu's work is to track only. Cheddi Khan will watch the left. You, the right. Tanner Sahib is to protect our backs. Whichever of us sees urgent danger says, ' Left, right, front, behind.' We halt *ek dam*, immediately. Is it understood? If suspicion only, touch the man in front, stop, do not speak. Silence and stillness are our weapons also. Is it understood? "

It was understood. The five of them moved as an unconventionally bunched army whose strength lay in concert.

Their passage made a rustling swish. There were indications that the tiger carried its victim by her waist. It had not stopped

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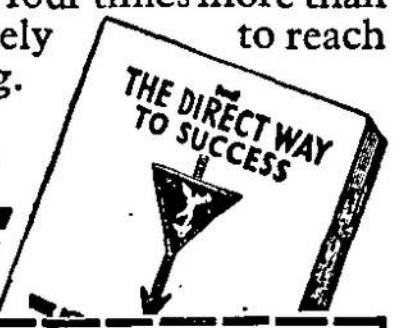

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to feed. The grass was less high and less thick now. The trail ran fairly straight for the horseshoe ridge, a hundred yards ahead. There the tiger would stop, or turn left in the hills direction, or right in the plains direction. There was need for greater caution. Where it must stop or turn, it might also circle.

They had come a mile or so. The day was warming up. Harry saw the woman's garment, a length of terra-cotta cotton. It made a pretty splash of colour against green barsh bushes with white flowers. He stopped. Bapu stepped up beside him. They were two highly expert pairs of eyes and ears, detecting nothing. It was open this side of the barsh bushes, no trees and no grass, a patch of rain-pitted sun-hard muttee. He went on. The rifle was getting heavy. His senses were sharp, not quite so sharp as they should have been.

The terra-cotta cloth had darker stains. The tiger had eaten a little here. Black hairs were about the place. It was a dirty, disgusting business that he hated.

He saw that the tiger had gone left, the better way, where there was a possibility of forcing an encounter. He looked the others over now. Bapu was all right. Cheddi Khan was perfectly all right. The forest guard was not. He had given half a dozen jittery warnings. Desmond took a long swig from his water-bottle, then handed it to Harry. He was thirsty, too. He washed his mouth out and took one sip. Desmond looked fine, sweating a bit, but the atmosphere was sweaty.

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" I think I remember this," he said in Harry's ear. " If the tiger follows along the bottom of the ridge, it comes to a dead end, doesn't it, where the hill and the nullah come together? "

Harry nodded. " Yes, but there are several places where it can break left. What about this bag of wind? I'd better get rid of him, don't you think? "

" I would." They were the old firm again from prison days.

" Climb this tree and watch," he told the forest guard. " Make no sound unless you see the tiger. Do not move." He shinned up without regard for his well-pressed khaki suit.

" I shall move fast on open ground," he told the others. He must reach the tiger before the tiger finished eating. Boldness and caution, these were the arms of a delicate balance.

Bapu nodded. He and Harry went back to the others. For a long way there had been no blood to follow. But there had been Bapu's uncanny skill, which was an endowment rather than a skill, questing about like a sober hound, no fear in his mind, nothing in his mind but this. " Sahib," he whispered now, " if the Bad One has not gone into the nullah, the Bad One must be there."

The ridge swung forward on the right, a vertical barrier leading round and on and up to the pass of Rimli a mile away and a thousand feet above. One impassable flank. The nullah or ravine curved in below them from the left. It was twenty feet wide and deep, and the walls were sheer. The ravine swung in to merge with the ridge itself a hundred yards ahead. The tracks of the Rimli man-eater, and the occasional arm or leg scuffings of its burden, led into the convergence of ravine and ridge. This was a narrowing plateau, ridge to the right, nullah to the left, blunt-nosed at the very end or apex. It was mixed cover there—bushes, rocks, grass, a few trees—adequate cover and sequestered. The tiger might have jumped down into the ravine and gone farther, for there was a widening to jungle up beyond the corner.

" If you're going to use your whizzbangs, hadn't we better make sure first that it hasn't gone on by the ravine? If it has, and it hears those things, we'll never get a second chance." True. Desmond was always sound, providing the checks if not the inspiration. He did not think it had done that, but perhaps he should find out. He could move in almost dead silence below the wall and muffled by it. Five minutes there and back.

He smiled at Desmond, pleased with him. " O.K., I'll go and see. Call if you see any movement. But whatever you do, don't shoot into that nullah. I don't want your bullets up my backside, Tanner." Desmond guffawed without a sound, like his old self.

" Let me go! "

He shook his head, went back to a gully, down into the ravine. Careful, vulnerable stalk along below the wall. Tracking was not a problem if it had jumped from that height. Any child could see the marks. None. But over and down to him came the uninhibited sounds of a tiger at its meal. He had been right and Desmond wrong, but no harm done.

Barking Dogs were what you let loose in a crowd at your prep. school. They darted about the ground from lesser bang to bang, about ten in all, worrying people's ankles. They were wonderful erratic spreaders of confusion and alarm. He used them occasionally in situations such as this. He had shown Bapu how to light the fuse and throw them. Bapu had been entranced.

Bapu looked along the cliff face now. "Yes, sahib, I can go there. But a stone might fall."

"*Kuch fikr nahin.* It does not matter. Thou wilt not go till we are in position." He gave him three Barking Dogs and a box of matches. Bapu's hands did not shake at all.

The plateau was not on one level, but on two. The upper shelf was flat against the cliff, and was divided from the lower by a drop of six feet or so. Thus, there were two terraces running to the broken scrub where Harry now positively knew the tiger lay. There was this difference of height, and also a difference of vegetation—for the upper terrace was bare and rocky, the lower patched with grass and bushes.

"I think one of two things will happen. Either it will break down into the ravine and go on that way, or it will break straight back this way on the lower level. I don't think it will come along the top because there's no cover. Now, here's the plan." He changed into Hindustani:

"Tanner Sahib and I will go forward together. He will stand at that tall rock. He will be guard of the higher level. I shall stand close above the ravine, and I shall be guard of the ravine. Cheddi Khan, if he is not too fat a man, will climb this tree."

"Sahib, I can climb this or any tree, but I will come with you." Cheddi Khan was not amused.

"I have given the order."

"Sahib, it is my pride always to hold the small gun at your side." He gave way to Cheddi Khan. He might need the .318.

"Look, Desmond," in English again. "*Don't fire too soon.* It will be forty yards from you when it first breaks out. Wait. Above all, don't fire unless it's committed to the upper level, that is, unless it's going to stay on the upper level."

"You've just said it won't come on the upper level."

"It might. You never know what the sods will do." But he was putting Desmond in the most unlikely place in the lee of a rock. He was doing as well as he reasonably could by Desmond, and by Desmond's wife.

One last thing. "Bapu, drop the Barking Dog close below thee at the bottom of the cliff. Do not throw. Is it understood?" The higher the Barking Dog went bang, the lower the tiger would be driven.

He and Desmond and Cheddi Khan went forward. He put Desmond into place. He glanced at him. Old Desmond was all right, jaw muscles flexing as they used to, he remembered. He was glad that Desmond had come along.

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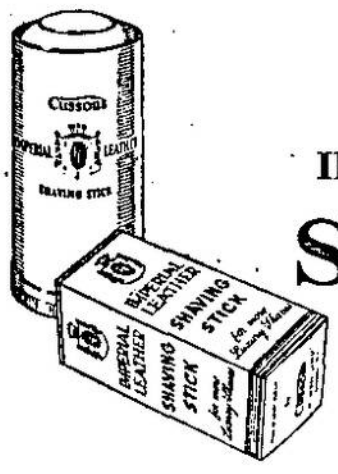

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He went down with Cheddi to his own place above the wall of the ravine. He put Cheddi into a cleft of rock beside him. Cheddi had nothing to do except change rifles in emergency, which he could do calmly and slickly. Cheddi was a stout chap with a brood of sons near Rawalpindi, a good rogue of a man's man and maker of small Cheddis.

Harry had thirty yards clear ahead. He had an excellent view left into the ravine and on. Desmond was behind and above him on the right. There was thick bush cover between him and the step to the upper level where Desmond waited at his tall rock, a thing like an obelisk or plinth. Clear to the left, clear in front, clear to the right. Blind spot half right behind. As good as he could hope for. No movement and no sound in the dense cover at the head of the terraced plateau. Harry raised his hand.

He did not watch Bapu clamber up the rock face of the ridge. He looked straight ahead. If that animal saw Bapu, it might break before any persuasion of Barking Dogs. There was no unsharpness in Harry now. The fluid tension was all over and through him. You know, he thought, I never thought of it before. But this tiger is the last one I shall ever shoot. Now Bapu came into the field of his right eye. Bapu was goating it along a ledge. He was nearly there. He had stopped.

The air was so still that Harry heard the sizzle of the match. The toss of a hand, the feather of smoke over and down in parabola. The Barking Dog went off. It flew up and over, clear to the ravine side of the cover, reached ground this time, harried back—bang and petty bang and pester—towards the cliff where Bapu stood.

Wrong, wrong, very bad. The Barking Dog stopped barking.

Bapu called. He saw the tiger's head. It was making for him diagonally from the upper level. It was coming down, as he had said it would. It was breaking fast, not charging. Good, after all.

But Desmond fired. He saw the strike, a miss. Too long a shot—precisely what he told him not to do.

The tiger switched direction into a full gallop, into a charge. The second shot crashed in this loud place, but the tiger did not falter as it moved out of sight.

He knew that Desmond could not reload. "Round the rock!" he shouted, and kept on shouting. Round the rock.

Desmond ducked to this side.

Harry was shouting at the tiger. He saw the tiger for too small a fraction of a second to get in a shot. It spun at the rock. He had captured its attention. It saw him from up there down to here. Desmond had skipped to the other side.

The tiger's face and jaws were in a sanguinary mess. It sprang down for Harry. He fired twice blindly into the heaving scrub, and the tiger came . . .

★ ***The Second Part of "Harry Black," by David Walker, appears in next month's Argosy, on sale January 10th.***

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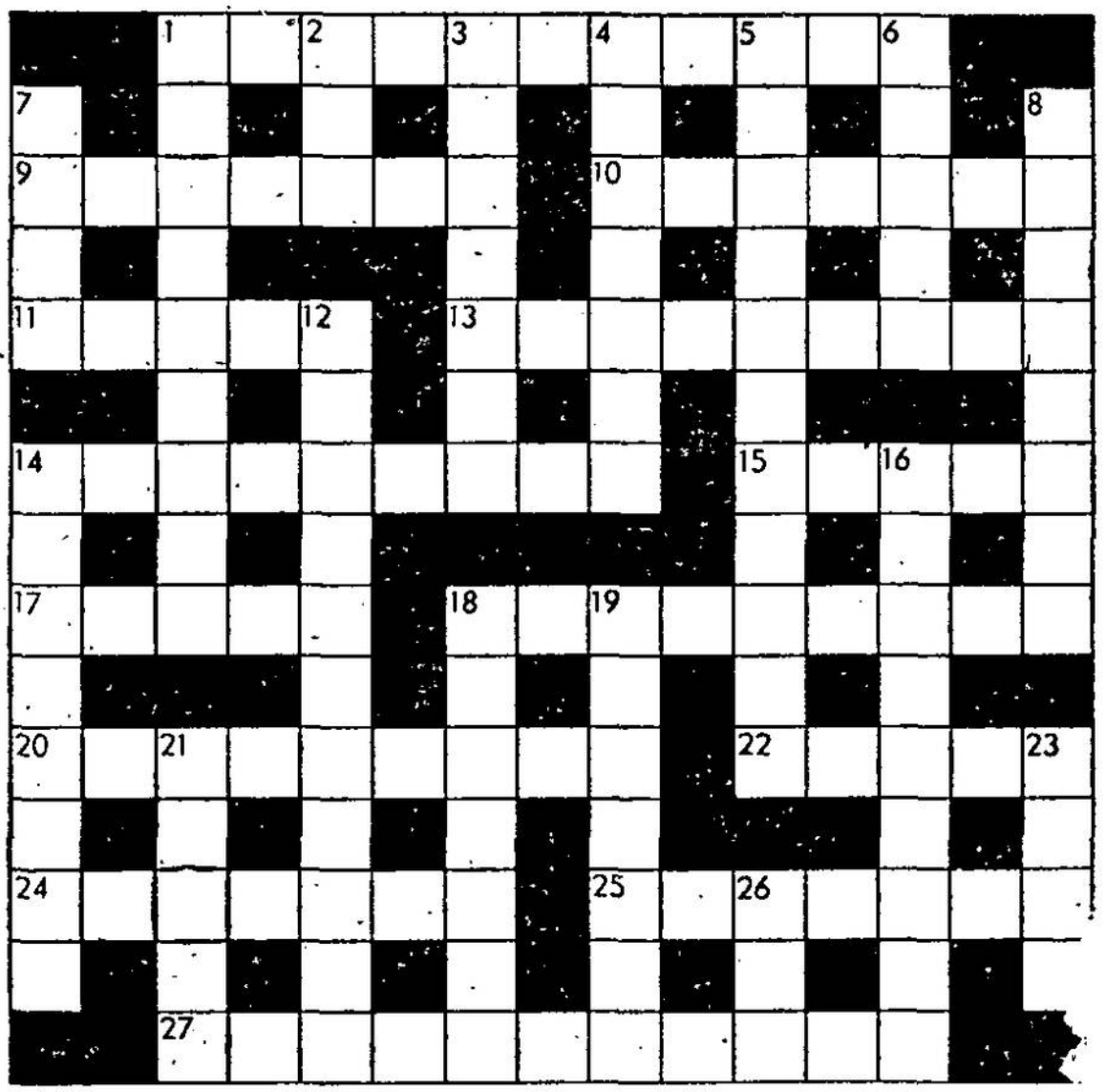

★

Solution on Page 71

★

CLUES

Across

1 Half a supporter ? (5, 6).

9 Useful in the laundry or at the bar (4, 3).

10 Like one of the Cunarders, perhaps (7).

11 A burning beast, said Blake (5).

13 Splicing it is a rum business (4, 5).

14 The result of a cold snap ? (5-4).

15 In an unusual phalanx (5).

17 Fifty arrived for this quadruped (5).

18 This district starts with a guarantee (9).

20 Rained gin ? Evidently it's a habit (9).

22 To welcome is to weep, in Scotland (5).

24 You tie Liz—to make use of her ? (7).

25 A good old-gentlemanly vice, said Byron (7).

27 Capability Brown's art, also known to printers (11).

Down

1 Do his duties involve fastening a horse-collar ? (4, 5).

2 Lie-by-the-fire—on the tennis court ! (3).

3 A Just-So father (7).

4 He's composed of twisted queries (7).

5 Domineeringly selling too much on the Stock Exchange ? (11).

6 She is musically mobile (5).

7 Help—for a wager (4).

8 Where Jekyll left his alter ego ? (4, 4).

12 Rat ate lion ? I make it revenge (11).

14 Unruly, but not quite fractious (8).

16 A square circle (5, 4).

18 Forbidding flags (7).

19 One might expect this State to be red (7).

21 This cooking utensil is barred (5).

23 It may be attached to a root, a boot, or a family (4).

26 This Baba outwitted forty (3).

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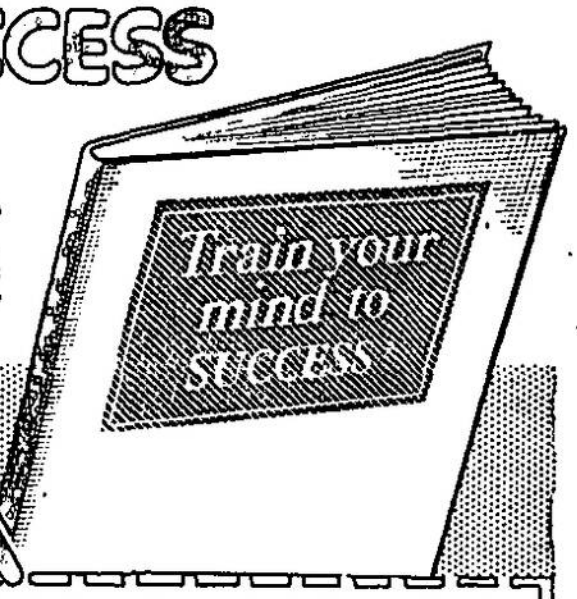

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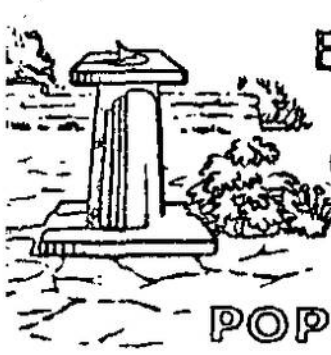

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PRACTICAL RESULTS

Student 357/3015: I have ha my story accepted by **BLACK WOODS** who are paying m £25 for it... *Student* 778/211 I thought it might interest yo to know that **THE COUNTRY MAN** has accepted a shor article of mine on an ol country custom . . . *Studen* 184/315: As you suggested I submitted the articles to th **NEW STATESMAN.** One wa published on the 17th July I have also had an articl accepted by **MEN ONLY** . . *Student* 181/282: You may b interested to hear that I ha a letter from the Editor o **ARGOSY**; they offered m Twenty-five Guineas for m story . . . *Student* 591/287 You will be pleased that m article submitted for m Second Lesson was publishe in the **DAILY MIRROR** and received Six Guineas for it . . *Student* 120/288: I hav established contact with th Editor of **PUNCH.** The iten was accepted for "Charivaria and is a good start . . . *Studen* 1179/347: I succeeded i getting four Big Game storie into **COURIER** and anothe about "Shrove Tuesday." Another article appeared i the August issue of **BLACK WOODS** . . . *Student* 1954/157 I have just corrected a proc of my story for **WID WORLD**: they have sinc accepted another and I hav sent in a third . . . *Studer* 171/162: I have sold my stor to **EVERYWOMAN** for 2 guineas . . . *Student* 1106/15 The B.B.C. accepted the scrip for the Light Programme- fee 9 guineas—after my firs lesson . . . *Student* 141/76: Th article which I wrote for th Second Test paper appeare in the **SUNDAY MAI** Thanks for the recommenda tion.